

ACTING (RE)CONSIDERED

A THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL GUIDE

2nd edition

Phillip B. Zarrilli

London and New York



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ACTING (RE)CONSIDERED

WORLDS OF PERFORMANCE

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For kor,
for all those with whom I work
and from whom I continue to learn,

and,
for Haris Pašović
and all the artists and people
of Sarajevo
and Bosnia/Herzegovina . . .

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PREFACE

Both the first and second editions of this book have been prompted by the need for a collection of essays which address the desire of many actors I know to understand not just one but many paradigms and approaches to acting; to raise and attempt to answer questions about acting and process; to provide useful information on principles, techniques, and approaches to acting drawn from both Western and non-Western sources; and to fill some of the gaps between practice and thought about acting.

Practitioners who work with me professionally or at university are immersed in daily training intended to discipline the bodymind through the Asian martial/meditation arts and related acting exercises as a psychophysiological basis for performance (Chapter 15). For some this is their first intensive exposure to an ongoing, rigorous, psychophysiological based approach to acting which often causes them to (re)consider not only how acting is embodied but also how they think and talk about acting, that is, their preconceptions about acting are questioned. Something similar has been happening for quite a while in many other studios around the world where alternative, psychophysiological processes are increasingly being used as primary to training the contemporary actor. The experience of such alternative approaches through the body often leads to a desire to explore paradigms and techniques of acting which can either complement or provide alternatives to psychological realism.

The overwhelmingly positive response to the structure and range of essays in the first edition of *Acting Reconsidered* has made the task of producing a second edition both very easy and extremely difficult. While keeping the overall structure of the book with three parts – (I) theories of and meditations on acting, (II) the body and training, and (III) the actor in performance – when asked which specific essays in the first edition might be cut to make room for the five new essays included here, colleagues, participants, and students alike were unanimous in wanting to keep every essay in the first edition. Given limitations of space, I regretfully decided to cut the essays by Duane Krause and Ian Watson.

In this second edition, the introductions, several essays, and the extensive bibliography have been revised or expanded to take account of new developments and/or publications in the field of acting since 1995. In addition, Part I includes an important new contribution to our thinking about acting and emotion by Dutch psychologist Elly Konijn. Part II begins with Eugenio Barba's seminal essay reflecting on the significance of exercises for the development of actors. Part III includes three new essays each focusing on the practice of internationally known performers/ensembles: Paul Allain explains the seminal training and performance work of Gardzienice Theatre Association of Poland; Ellen Halperin-Royer describes the actor's process when working with Robert Wilson on *Danton's Death*; and the two part interview/account by Carol Martin and Richard Schechner allows us

to understand the creative process Anna Deavere Smith uses to develop and enact her critically acclaimed solo performances.

It is hoped that this second, expanded edition will continue to stimulate practice and thought about acting around the world.

Phillip B. Zarrilli

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Since moving to the U.K. in 1999, I have been inspired and stimulated by work and/or exchanges with Richard Gough and the entire staff of the Centre for Performance Research (Wales), Theatre Asou (Graz, Austria), Peadar Kirk, Lorna Marshall, Jo Shapland, all those training at the Tyn-y-parc C.V.N. Kalari/Studio in Llanarth, Dick McCaw and the International Workshop Festival (London), Peter Hulton, Ali Hodge, Emilyn Claid, and all my colleagues and students at the University of Exeter.

Continued thanks to the inspiration of Indonesian playwright/director Putu Wijaya, *kathakali* performer Kalamandalam M. P. Sankaran Namboodiri and to Ota Shogo for his remarkable "station" trilogy, and those who have worked with me on *The Water Station* in performance or workshop, and to Stubby et al. and CPR who first called Ota's work to my attention.

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Chapter 5, "'Just Be Your Self': Logocentrism and Difference in Performance Theory"

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Chapter 6, "The Actor's Emotions Reconsidered," is a thoroughly revised and rewritten updating of Elly Konijn's earlier essay, "Actors and Emotions: A Psychological Perspective" (*Theatre Research International*, 1995, 20, 2: 132–140).

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Chapter 4, "On Acting and Not-Acting" by Michael Kirby (16, 1: 3–15, 1972).

Chapter 8, "An Amulet Made of Memory" by Eugenio Barba (41, 4: 127–132, 1997).

Chapter 9, "Meyerhold's Biomechanics" by Mel Gordon (18, 3: 73–88, 1974).

Chapter 10, "Etienne Decroux's Promethean Mime" by Deidre Sklar (29, 4: 64–75, 1985).

Chapter 11, "Actor Training in the Neutral Mask" by Sears A. Eldredge and Hollis W. Huston (24, 4: 19–28, 1978).

Chapter 12, "Bali and Grotowski: Some Parallels in the Training Process" by I Wayan Lendra (35, 1: 113–139, 1991).

Chapter 14, "My Bodies: The Performer in West Java" by Kathy Foley (34, 2: 62–80, 1990).

Chapter 16, "Gardzienice Theatre Association of Poland" by Paul Allain (39, 1: 93–121, 1995).

Chapter 20, "Dario Fo: The Roar of the Clown" by Ron Jenkins (30, 1: 191–179, 1986).

Chapter 23, "Rachel Rosenthal Creating Her Selves" by Eelka Lampe (32, 1: 170–190, 1988).

Chapter 24, "Task and Vision: Willem Dafoe in LSD" by Philip Auslander (29, 2: 94–98, 1985).

Chapter 25, "David Warrilow: Creating Symbol and Cypher" by Laurie Lassiter (29, 4: 3–12, 1985).

Chapter 27, "Anna Deavere Smith Part I: The Word Becomes You: an interview by Carol Martin" (37, 4: 45–62, 1993) and "Part II: Acting as Incorporation" by Richard Schechner (37, 4: 63–64, 1993).

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Chapter 17, "Effector Patterns of Basic Emotions: a psychophysiological method for training actors" (*Journal of Social and Biological Structures*, 10: 1–19, 1987), by Susana Bloch, Pedro Orthous and Guy Santibanez-H is published by permission of Jai Press Inc. and the authors.

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Chapter 26, "Robert Wilson and the Actor: Performing in *Danton's Death*" (*Theatre*

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Some previously published essays in this volume make use of gender language common when first authored. Some essays also do not include full citations or bibliographical references. Unless revised by the author, gender language and occasional incomplete citations appear as when initially published.

1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Between theory and practice

Phillip B. Zarrilli

Scientists of the body speak in figures, teachers of acting speak in images, artists speak in words, theorists speak in propositions. To speak in any of these forking tongues is to be split from the others. It is necessary, though perhaps not possible, that we describe a line that will join these several points. The gap between performance and thought is not simple, but is composed of sub-gaps on either side, between the pedagogical imagery of performance and the flesh which performance possesses, between thought about the theatre and the metathought which plays through theatre . . . The performer and the thinker could momentarily meet in the sign's provisional and already receding closure. The two might be – is it too much to ask? – the same person.

(Hollis Huston 1984: 199)

There are many languages and discourses of acting, each written/spoken from a particular point of view. Theorists often speak only to theorists; practitioners only to practitioners. Too seldom do they speak to each other. This book invites us to try to speak and listen across these gaps and boundaries to each other and to those parts of our “selves” which might practice theory or theorize practice.

Like the seminal book of Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy, *Actors on Acting* (1970[1949]), this collection, by juxtaposing historically diverse and often contradictory views of acting, invites the reader to (re)consider both acting and discourses on acting. I use “(re)consider” to mark clearly the implicitly processual nature of “considering.” This view invites us not only to see performance as processual but also to see that “both society and human beings are performative, always already processually under construction” (Drewal 1991: 4).

From this point of view, theatre-making is a mode of socio-cultural practice. As such, it is not an innocent or naive activity separate from or above and beyond everyday reality, history, politics, or economics.¹ As theatre historian Bruce McConachie asserts, “theatre is not epiphenomenal, simply reflecting and expressing determinate realities and forces” (1989: 230); rather, as a mode of socio-cultural

practice theatre is a complex network of specific, interactive *practices* (directing, designing, acting, dramaturgy, devising, promotion, management, etc.) which helps to constitute, shape, and affect “selves” as well as historical events and relationships. The relationship between any of the doers and the done (directors, designers, actors, etc.) is *always* actualized within a specific network of relationships and material circumstances which, as a process and a practice, impinges on all those doing what is being done.²

For the contemporary actor who is exposed to and/or expected to perform in a wide variety of types of theatre/performance, the actor’s perception and practice of acting is a complex, ongoing set of intellectual and psychophysiological negotiations. These negotiations are between and among one “self” and a variety of (explicitly or implicitly) competing paradigms and discourses of acting/performance. The actor encounters these as a part of folklore, mass media, and stage shows; in manifestos and/or scholarly treatises (on acting, feminism/s, neo-Marxist thought, etc.); and in the specific training or “formations” through which these negotiations are constantly (re)figured. Teachers and theorists alike experience times when their perceptions of acting, and/or its practices, are altered.

For the actor, moments of (re)consideration are times when practice and thought crystallize in an insight which clarifies his or her (embodied) performance practice and technique. Yoshi Oida, in his 1992 book on acting, describes one such moment. Before joining Peter Brook’s international company in 1968, Yoshi had been well known in Japanese films and theatre as a Western-style actor. But he had also been trained in *no*, kabuki dance, and bunraku. While on tour in rural Iran, Brook’s company gave a performance of a work-in-progress.

After the show, Peter said to me, “Your acting is too concentrated and strong for this style of work.” I realized that I was still performing in accordance with the principles of *no* theatre where the actor’s concentration must be extremely intense. But popular theatre requires another approach. And I realized that just as there are many levels of performance, there is no one “right” way to act.

(Oida 1992: 72)

Or, there are moments when the actor’s relationship to his or her practice is altered in a way that makes clear that there can be no “neutrality” in art. As Eelka Lampe reports in this volume (Chapter 23), performance artist/feminist Rachel Rosenthal’s (re)consideration of acting was prompted by her attendance at a conference of women artists at the California Institute of the Arts in 1971:

Because she had been taught a history of art that considered only the contribution of male artists, and because she thought of herself as an artist, she identified with men. “Then I came to this conference, and I saw slides of extraordinary work. . . . And so for the first time in my life, I began to shift my identification, and began to see that I could be an artist and be a woman.”

Any (re)consideration is simultaneously personal, socio-cultural, and ideological, and therefore includes both idiosyncratic as well as collective/social dimensions. What may or may not prompt (re)consideration depends upon one’s “historical circumstances.” For the nineteen year old student of acting from New Glarus, Wisconsin, whose experience of acting theory and practice was limited to American versions of Stanislavskian-based acting, studying an historical account which

clarifies the differences between the later Stanislavsky's method of physical actions and Strasberg's notion of affective memory may lead to a profound (re)consideration of acting. So might encountering a performance (in the flesh or via type or tape) by Dario Fo, Rachel Rosenthal, David Warrilow, DV-8, Forced Entertainment, a Tadashi Suzuki-trained actor, or a performance of *kathakali* by Gopi Asan. Whatever prompts a particular (re)consideration, the reverberations of that encounter have the potential to affect not only one's acting but also one's understanding of "self," society, ideology, politics, etc.

Acting (Re)Considered invites students of acting, actors, and theorists alike to put aside parochial preconceptions and points of view that propose acting as *a* truth (that is, one system, discourse, or practice). This book invites instead a pro-active, processual approach which cultivates a critical awareness of acting as multiple and always changing. Of course, in the moment of performance, the actor *must* embody a specific set of actions *as if these were absolute*. But every "absolute" viewed historically and processually is part of a multiplicity.

(RE)CONSIDERING CONTEXT AND ENVIRONMENT

The critical awareness and reflection which (re)considerations can prompt does not occur in a vacuum. Teachers of acting, professional actors, directors, and producers have control over, and therefore responsibility for, the working/learning environments we create. To what degree are we actively making an environment which encourages critical inquiry and reflection, not only about "art" in the narrow sense but also concerning the material circumstances and issues implicit in the art we make? How theatre is made – from scene work and exercises, to rehearsals, to productions – includes attention to issues of race, gender, class, and ethnicity. Failing that, we abrogate our responsibility not only to train students' acting skills but also to educate them about what they are being trained to perform.³

THEORIES, META-THEORIES, AND ACTING (RE)CONSIDERED

Every time an actor performs, he or she implicitly enacts a "theory" of acting – a set of assumptions about the conventions and style which guide his or her performance, the structure of actions which he or she performs, the shape that those actions take (as a character, role, or sequence of actions as in some performance art), and the relationship to the audience. Informing these assumptions are culture-specific assumptions about the body-mind relationship, the nature of the "self," the emotions/feelings, and performance context.⁴ Enacting these assumptions is as true for the student as it is for the likes of Sarah Bernhardt and Yoshi Oida. Each embodies specific theories and practices of acting locatable within a set of historical, socio-cultural, and aesthetic/dramaturgical circumstances. Likewise, genres have specific theories and practices of acting which are also historically and contextually specific.⁵

In addition to the specific theories and practices of acting, there are meta-theories reflecting more generally on the nature, practice, and phenomenon of acting. To bridge some of the gaps between specific theories and practices of acting and the meta-theoretical discussions, I have organized the essays in this collection into three parts, each with its own introduction and suggestions for further reading.

In Part I, “Theories of and Meditations on Acting,” the reader is asked to reflect “meta-theoretically” on acting, while Parts II and III focus on the specifics. The essays in Part II (re)consider “The Body and Training” and those in Part III (re)consider “The Actor in Performance.” Internally, the essays within Parts II and III have been organized in roughly chronological order. For readers who want to defer theory, reading Part II or Part III first makes as much sense as beginning with theory. I have selected essays not only from different parts of the world but also by practicing theorists, that is, that ever-expanding number who (thankfully) eschew the oversimplistic dichotomies between theory and practice.

Part I

THEORIES OF AND MEDITATIONS ON ACTING

2

INTRODUCTION

Phillip B. Zarrilli

During the 1980s numerous scholarly studies of acting began to make use of a wide variety of critical methodologies including phenomenology (States Chapter 3 [this volume], 1985; Wilshire 1982), Derridean deconstruction (Auslander Chapter 5 [this volume]), cultural, contextual, and intellectual histories (Roach 1980, 1985; Worthen 1984; Burns 1990; Schmitt 1990; Riley 1997, Zarrilli 2000a), semiotics (Elam 1980; Aston and Savona 1991; Fischer-Lichte 1992), feminist reconsiderations of acting process, theory, and history (Jenkins and Ogden-Malouf 1985; Diamond 1988; Davis 1991), among others.¹

The essays in Part I invite readers to take a step back from considering any specific theory or practice of acting and to reflect more generally. The essays by States and Auslander are metatheoretical in that they help us to (re)consider the performances of particular actresses such as Sarah Bernhardt and the work of Stanislavsky, Brecht, Grotowski, etc.; Kirby prompts us to reflect on how we differentiate between “acting” and “not-acting,” and Konijn provokes us to (re)consider the relationship between acting and emotion.²

Bert O. States’ “The Actor’s Presence: Three Phenomenal Modes,” along with his longer book-length phenomenology of acting (1985), approaches theatre as a “speech act” in order to explore how the actor’s relationship to the audience may shift “keys” during a performance or within a culture over time. States explores three “pronominal modes”: the self-expressive in which the virtuosity of the actor predominates, the collaborative in which the actor’s direct interaction/communication with the audience predominates, and the representational in which the actor’s function as the vehicle of signification predominates.

Michael Kirby’s “On Acting and Not-Acting” describes a continuum from non-matrixed activities, such as those in Happenings (“not-acting”), to character acting (“complex acting.”) Kirby considers “not-acting” to include a wide range of “non-matrixed” performances in which what the performers do onstage has no representational function within a dramatic narrative. Kabuki stage attendants (*koken*) are onstage, but assumed to be “invisible” as they assist the performers or move properties. Performers in Happenings do simple “tasks.” Both types of

activities are “not imbedded, as it were, in matrices of pretended or represented character, situation, place, and time.” Kirby’s descriptive continuum prompts us to consider carefully how and what we define as “acting” and/or “not-acting.”

In “Just Be Your Self” Philip Auslander gives a deconstructive reading of the acting theories of Stanislavsky, Brecht, and Grotowski in terms of the “metaphysics of presence” which lies behind the commonplace ideas of self, identity, and presence. Auslander points out the (limiting) metaphysical assumptions on which modernist theories of acting have been based.

In “The Actor’s Emotions Reconsidered” Dutch psychologist, Elly Konijn revisits the central problem of emotion in Western acting theory and practice first raised by Dennis Diderot in his 1773 statement of the paradox of acting (see also Konijn, 2000). Konijn’s study helpfully draws on contemporary cognitive psychology to provide a nuanced four-fold model of the relationship between acting and emotion which differentiates between private, task, intended, and character emotions. Konijn’s account provides a model for considering the various facets of the actor’s process in relation to emotion and feeling in training, workshop/rehearsal, as well as performance, thereby differentiating the experience of the novice from that of an experienced, virtuosic performer who is able to shape the actor’s task-emotions through training and/or practical experience. Her research also enables us to understand how Diderot’s early account of the apparent paradox of acting was pointing toward the complex interaction between the experiential and cognitive components of emotion in the actor’s performance of characters.

THEORY AND THE PRACTICE OF ACTING

The Metaphorical Languages of Acting

Too often, when we think and talk about acting, we do not examine either our language or the assumptions that lie behind it.³ Increasingly over the past 75 years, following Ferdinand de Saussure’s assertion that language does not provide us with access to *the* “Real,” but rather with a *version* of reality (1966), scholars from numerous disciplines began to question the typically non-reflexive, positivist ways in which people think, talk, and write. James Clifford argues that all narratives (including those about acting) are “constructed, artificial . . . cultural accounts” (1986: 2) which are not representations of *a* truth or *a* reality, but rather “inventions of culture” in Roy Wagner’s sense (1981). Edward M. Bruner said the same thing in a slightly different way – that all texts are formed around implicit stories constructed according to who receives the narrative (1986). If we accept the premise that all narratives are “inventions,” then the discourses of acting/performance are locatable within a particular historical, socio-cultural context, that is, each narrative – including this one – has one or more implicit stories that were written for *particular* audiences in *particular* contexts.

Many discourses about acting assume that they are expressing *the* truth. Most narratives foreground neither the process of constructing this “truth” nor the voice or specific position from which this (version of) “truth” is being constructed. To do so would reveal the fact that *this* “truth” is a particular version authored by a particular person for a particular audience in a particular place and time, and is thereby open to question and revision. Consequently, the epistemological

assumption that a discourse of acting is *the* truth remains in the background, untold. One name given to these implicit stories and sets of assumptions is “ideology.” British culture theorist Graeme Turner summarizes Althusser’s definition of ideology as

a conceptual framework “through which men interpret, make sense of, experience and ‘live’ the material conditions in which they find themselves.” Ideology forms and shapes our consciousness of reality. For good or ill, the world it constructs is the one we will always inhabit.

(Turner 1990: 26)⁴

Languages of acting, like other propositional modes of linguistic construction, mask not only their positionality and ideology but also their referential, signifying nature. As Mark Johnson explains,

because of the limitations of our propositional modes of representation, we have a hard time trying to express the full meaning of our experiences. . . . So while we must use propositional language to describe these dimensions of experience and understanding, we must not mistake our description for the thing described.

(Johnson 1987: 4)

Long ago, Nietzsche called our attention to the epistemological problem implicit in the “truth” claims of language. Nietzsche asked, “What therefore is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms . . . truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions” (cited in Spivak 1976: xxii).

Take, for example, the assumptions behind one commonplace set of metaphors used to talk about acting, that of “believability” and “honesty.” Several years ago, while still teaching at the University of Wisconsin, a male undergraduate acting student became very confused when told by an acting teacher, “I don’t think you believe what you are doing.” The use of “believe” or its commonplace synonym “be honest” by many acting teachers and directors stems from the predominant viewpoint implicit in realistic acting that a character when enacted must conform to ordinary social reality as constructed from the spectator’s point of view. The audience needs to be convinced that the character is behaving as some would in “ordinary life” within the “given circumstances” of the scene. The student explained that his confusion stemmed from the fact that although he felt as if he were being totally honest in the moment, that is, he “believed in” what he was doing, the teacher/spectator was not convinced.

In this case, what does “believe” signify? Why are such apparently simple ideas so confusing for young actors? First, “believe” makes an implicit truth claim which disguises its metaphorical construction. The request for “believability” collapses the character as a fictive construct and sign system into the actor-as-person. The teacher seems to ask the actor to *be* “believable.” The actor is not asked to create those psychophysiological relationships to specific actions that might be *read* by the director/spectator/teacher as signs of honesty. The language of “believability” is problematic because in its propositional mode it appears to make truth claims which mask the referential, signifying quality of any linguistic statement about acting. It also masks its ideology of identity – the collapse of the “person” of the performer into the role.⁵ The implicit “truth” claim in the proposition, “you must

believe in order to make me believe,” is mistakenly understood by both teacher and student alike as an apt description for “the thing described” – acting. A second problem with this particular metaphor is that “believe” is devoid of any reference to the body; there is no assertion that “believability” needs to be embodied.

The student in this situation is faced with two choices: first, by understanding that *all* languages of acting are metaphorical, he can attempt to fill in the gaps between this particular language and what he needs to do as an actor; that is, he can translate the confusing language into terms that are more actable and thereby make choices which appear to the teacher/director as “believable”; second, if he finds the underlying philosophical assumptions which inform this language and paradigm of acting problematic, he may actively and openly problematize the language and the paradigm it assumes, and search for more appropriate alternatives.

Linguistic philosophers Lakoff and Johnson title their seminal study of the metaphorical nature of language, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). This title is an apt metaphor of the relationship between actors and the discourses of their practice. If propositional language can never fully represent acting, then actors have no choice but to “live by” metaphors. The question is not whether languages of acting can/should be metaphorical, but what specific “metaphors” are actors to “live by”?

Body-Mind Dualism and the (Supposed) Resurrection of the Body

Given the powerful optimism generated by the achievements of science during the nineteenth century, late nineteenth and early twentieth century theatre theorists labored under the modernist illusion that there *was* an absolute, objective, “scientific” practice and language of acting. Delsarte, Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, and a host of their disciples each developed “systems” which used languages of acting based on the assumption of an objective science (of the mind and/or body).⁶ On the other hand, German Expressionists, Artaud and others rebelled against rationalism and/or “the word.” They assumed languages and metaphors of acting which romantically reified the subjectivity of the actor, thereby making the intensely “personal” the source of “truth.” Objectivism and subjectivism remain two sides of the same problematic, dualistic coin.

To explore both sides of the body-mind problem for actors, I will first re-read Sonia Moore’s *Training an Actor: The Stanislavski System in Class* (1979), and then re-read Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s seminal attempt to “resurrect” the body, the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962). I have selected the texts by Moore and Merleau-Ponty, not because I wish necessarily to single out either for “attack,” but rather because each narrative represents the general contours of the body-mind “problem” still commonplace among many students of acting.

Moore views the body along with “voice, speech, his powers of observation and imagination, his constant control over the ‘feeling of truth,’ his spiritual movement” as part of the “actor’s apparatus” or “instrument” (1979: 35). One looks for students whose instrument is “trainable.” Although Moore says that she wants to redress “one of the gravest distortions of Stanislavski in the American theatre” by reasserting the important place of “the actor’s physical training” in the Stanislavski System (1979: 35), she never articulates a process by which the actor’s corporeality is central to the training, other than to call for physical training to make the body “responsive.” Of the relationship between the body and mind, Moore states that

“an actor’s control over his body should be as complete as that of a dancer” (1979: 16). Dualism intact, the mind controls the body. Moore quotes without explaining that “the physical excellence that Stanislavski demands is intimately related to the psychological side of the technique” (1979: 16). Although Moore says that the goal of the System is “reincarnation” and that “the body must begin the action and it must finish it” (1979: 15;38), she never explains how bodily action is incarnated or how the body initiates action. Moore’s overriding concern is not with the particulars of the process by which one embodies action, but with the construction of the psychology of a character’s motivations.

Giving instructions in an exercise, Moore tells one of her students, “Let your body express what you have *in* your mind,” (1979: 36, emphasis added). She tells students to take an image *in* mind, and then “make sure that your body expresses it” (1979: 37). She instructs people to “think, think and make your body project what is in your mind” (1979: 42, emphasis added). The mind is represented as a container of images etc., separate from the body. Whatever is “in mind” can be transferred to the body. This mind-as-container is a place where the “emotions” are “stored” (1979: 65) to be re-lived in the act of performance. For Moore the mind asserts “conscious control” over the body – an assumption illustrated when Moore concludes that the System permits the actor “consciously to control his entire apparatus of experiencing and incarnating” (1979: 34). For Moore the actor’s mind is an all-knowing entity controlling *all* experience and embodiment.

The System provides a certain means of control based on a stimulus-response model imposing order on disorder. Moore assumes a nature/culture dichotomy where culture (male/mind/texts) controls, shapes, and tames nature (female/emotions/the body). Control is provided by what Moore variously calls “thinking,” “logic,” or “conscious control” – the Cartesian rational mind. Moore tells her students, “We stop thinking in life only when we are unconscious or dead, and the character is dead when you stop thinking as the character” (1979: 81). The actor’s mind becomes an all-knowing entity, separate from the body, controlling all experience and embodiment.

As Sherry Dietchman so astutely observed of her own experience as an actor in training,

Until I began training I thought that my focus problems were just mental. The fact that they may be physical as well simply never occurred to me. . . . Very often, I think the body is ignored or “cut off” in actor training. Most of my classes emphasized things such as emotional reality, script analysis, substitution, and memory recall. Body training is either kept separate or ignored altogether . . . I wonder what it is in our culture that perpetuates that split. More importantly . . . I need to find how that separation can be overcome during performance.

(Dietchman 1990)

Moore’s language and Dietchman’s training reflect the Euro-American experience of the dichotomy or gap thought to exist between the cognitive, conceptual, formal, or rational and the bodily, perceptual, material, and emotional. The consequence of this split is that all meaning, logical connection, reasoning, and conceptualization are aligned with mental or rational operations, while perception, imagination, and feeling are aligned with bodily operations (Johnson 1987: xxv). This version of body-mind dualism can be traced back to Plato who asserted that the mind (*psyche*)

had an independent and superior metaphysical status capable of participating in the knowledge of the world of forms. The body was part of the physical world and therefore a deterrence or hindrance to a person's epistemic and spiritual development (Shaner 1985: 42).

In 1949 philosopher Gilbert Ryle summarized this split:

every human being has both a body and a mind. Some would prefer to say that every human being is both a body and a mind. His body and his mind are ordinarily harnessed together but after the death of the body his mind may continue to exist and function.

Human bodies are in space and are subject to the mechanical laws which govern all other bodies in space. Bodily processes and states can be inspected by external observers. So a man's bodily life is as much a public affair as are the lives of animals and reptiles and even as the careers of trees, crystals and planets.

But minds are not in space, nor are their operations subject to mechanical laws. The workings of one mind are not witnessable by other observers; its career is private. Only I can take direct cognisance of the states and processes of my own mind. A person therefore lives through two collateral histories, one consisting of what happens in and to his mind.

(Ryle 1949: 11–12)⁷

American psychological realism's approach to constructing the theatrical character is particularly susceptible to body-mind dualism. The rhetoric and semantics used to represent "creating a character" all too often give the impression that the character is an object logically constructed by the mind and then put into the body. There can be little if any discussion of the process by which the character so constructed gets in-corporated. But if the physical body is sometimes lost to the discourses and practices of American method acting, the physical was never lost to Stanislavsky and a number of his best known students. The master developed his "method of physical actions," admonished his actors to understand their work as a craft recognizing the character as a physical score to be specifically crafted:

Extra gestures are the equivalent of trash, dirt, spots. An actor's performance which is cluttered up with a multiplicity of gestures will be like that messy sheet of paper. Therefore before he [*sic*] undertakes the physical interpretation . . . he must rid himself of all superfluous gestures . . . Unrestrained movements, natural though they may be to the actor himself, only blur the design of his part, make his performance unclear, monotonous and uncontrolled.

(Stanislavsky 1949: 69)

As Jean Benedetti reports, late in his life Stanislavsky sought, through the method of physical action, to overcome what divided "mind from body, knowledge from feeling, analysis from action" (1982: 66; also see Gordon 1987: 206ff). Bella Merlin's account of her recent Stanislavskian-based training in Russia corroborates the fact that today's Russian teachers engage in "little cerebral analysis of texts in rehearsals" (2001: 6), but rather, emphasize both the later method of physical action and active analysis where the emphasis is on "acting, doing, experiencing, playing" (2001: 255).

Stanislavsky's brilliant, if wayward student, Michael Chekhov, developed an approach to the creation of character based on an active use of the imagination,

not as an image *in* the head, but as an act of engagement of the entire bodymind. The actor explores the creation of a character by physicalizing a “psychological gesture” through which “the soul of the character and the physical body of the performer meet” (Gordon 1991: xxxi).

Given the resilience of mind-body dualism, students often experience a “real” *disjuncture* between their minds and their bodies. They have great difficulty “freeing” themselves from the “mind” to work out from their bodies. They often have a “mental block” which they must overcome before they are free to allow themselves to explore how to discover a psychophysical impulse as a beginning point in action. I read this disjuncture not simply as an example of an acting problem, but as part of an ongoing cultural reconsideration of the paradigms, discourses, and relationships between the body, mind, and experience in the constitution of meaning, knowledge, “self,” and our daily practice(s) of life – including acting. A parallel reconsideration is manifest in “new age” and popular alternative body therapies, systems of healing, and regimes of producing the healthy/fit body, as well as in the widely divergent discourses of the body and experience by philosophers, social scientists, and feminists.⁸

Historically, the 1962 appearance of the English translation of Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* marks a paradigmatic shift in thinking about the role of the body in the constitution of experience. Merleau-Ponty articulated the fundamental philosophical problem of the body’s role (or lack thereof) in constituting experience. He critiqued the heretofore static, objective nature of most representations of the body and experience.

[T]hinking which looks on from above, and thinks of the object-in-general, must return to the “there is” which underlies it; to the site, the soil of the sensible and opened world such as it is in our life and for our body – not that possible body which we may legitimately think of as an information machine but that actual body I call mine, this sentinel standing quietly at the command of my words and my acts.

(Merleau-Ponty 1964: 160–1)

Moore’s formulation of acting, and my student’s confusion over “believability,” clearly assumed thinking which looked “on from above.” While they both acknowledge the body, neither knew how to account for what Merleau-Ponty calls the “actual body I call mine,” that is, the body as “an experienced phenomenon . . . in the immediacy of its lived concreteness,” and “not as a representable object . . . for the abstractive gaze” (Schräg 1969: 130).

Merleau-Ponty challenged the Cartesian *cogito* and asserted the primacy of lived experience in the constitution of meaning. His phenomenology eloquently (re)claimed the centrality of the body and embodied experience as the locus for “experience as it is lived in a deepening awareness” (Levine 1985: 62). He rejected the exclusive assumption of the natural sciences and modern psychology that treated the body as a thing, object, instrument, or machine under the command and control of an all-knowing mind.

By the early 1960s in America, experimental avant-garde theatre and “happenings” prompted a radical rediscovery of the body by foregrounding the (supposedly) unmediated body/acts of the performer (Kirby Chapter 4 [this volume]; see also Sanford 1995). Artaud’s *The Theatre and Its Double* helped shape postwar experimentation when he called for a rebellion against the subjugation of theatre to

the text and the psychological. He wanted the actor to be an “athlete of the heart” (1958: 133) who could create and enact a “metaphysics” “through the skin” with productions not performed from written plays, but created directly “around subjects, events, or known words” – productions where space could speak and where the actor, so long denied a voice would return to a “physical understanding of images” (1958: 33ff). This vision of the actor has been actualized today in much alternative, “physical” performance work which intentionally blurs the boundaries between dance, movement, and theatre, such as Frantic Assembly, DV-8, Pina Bausch’s *tanzteatre*, and Japanese *butoh*.

At the Teatr Laboratorium in Opole, Poland (founded 1959), Jerzy Grotowski built on Stanislavsky’s later work by developing and articulating an intensive psychophysical pathway for the actor aimed at self-transcendence in which the actor strips himself down to become a living incarnation. Inspired in part by his observations of the intensive training of actor-dancers in the *kathakali* dance-drama of Kerala, India, Grotowski’s early theatre work developed an intensive psychophysical process of physical/vocal training aimed at elimination of anything extraneous. The actor was to be engaged in a total psychophysical process as a holy act of self-abnegation.

Some experimenters threw out “character” altogether as inimical to the immediacy of communion “in the moment” between performer and spectator. Working with the Performance Group, Richard Schechner overtly rejected objectivist assumptions about the body which treated it as an instrument, asserting that “nothing is worse for the performer than ‘movement exercises’ or abstract ‘body work.’ Don’t treat your body as a thing. *Your body is not your ‘instrument’; your body is you*” (1973: 145). Schechner called for an in-body process by means of which the performer might realize an organic connection between the body and mind:

All performance work begins and ends in the body. When I talk of spirit or mind or feelings or psyche, I mean dimensions of the body. The body is an organism of endless adaptability. A knee can think, a finger can laugh, a belly cry, a brain walk and a buttock listen.

(Schechner 1973: 132)

Such thinking assumes the bodymind as a *gestalt* to be developed through appropriate training exercises for immediate expressivity and “presence” in the theatrical moment.

Radical resurrections of the body have permanently altered the role that the body and physicalization plays in training most contemporary actors today. Movement-based approaches to acting (King 1971, 1981) are now commonplace, and many recent books published on a textually-based Stanislavskian approach to character acting all pay particular attention to the role of the body and physical in acting. Richard Hornby (1992), John Harrop (1992), and Bella Merlin (2001) all reject (explicitly or implicitly) a Strasbergian-based version of an over-indulgent method approach to character acting, and replace it with their own revisions of a textually-based approach to acting building on the later Stanislavskian notion of physical action; all foreground the problem of dualism and attempt to bring the body fully into the process of creating a character by defining acting as a psycho-physiological *gestalt* which requires the actor to become skilled through physical discipline and control; all use or assume the active, physiologically-suggestive

metaphor of the actor as “athlete”; and clearly differentiate between the everyday experience of emotion and the similar, yet different texture of theatrical emotions.⁹

As witnessed in many essays in this volume and such recent books as *An Acrobat of the Heart: A Physical Approach to Acting* by Stephen Wangh (2000), *Through the Body* by Dymphna Callery (2001), and *The Body Speaks* by Lorna Marshall (2001), the primacy of the body and psychophysical process as the beginning point of entry into acting process is becoming commonplace. Along with the influential work of Jacques LeCoq (1921–1999), many approaches to acting today emphasize a *gestalt* approach where the paradigm of the actor-as-interpreter of a theatrical text is replaced with a paradigm of the actor-as-creator. Here the point of departure for creating a performance begins with the actor’s imagination, improvisation, and kinaesthetic/spatial awareness.

However, this “resurrection of the body” has not been unproblematic. If and when the body, experience *per se*, and/or “self” are reified as an essential “real,” it problematically assumes that the subject or “self” is a stable location, and that a particular experience or transcendental self exists as an ideal or originary construct or essence. In some improvisational, bodily and/or experientially saturated approaches to acting where “being in the moment” is emphasized, a Cartesian dualism is simply reinscribed in the form of an overly simplistic and monolithic subjectivity often described as the actor’s “presence,” or as an “organic” or “natural” state of being.¹⁰ A reified subjectivist notion of “presence” is as complicit in a dualist metaphysics as is the Cartesian “mind.” Neither provides an adequate account of the “body” in the mind, the “mind” in the body, or of the process by which the signs read as “presence” are a discursive construct.

I am too often reminded of the mystification which a subjectivist indulgence of “experience,” the “body,” or “presence” has when a student comes to a class where I use Asian martial arts to train actors and initially “spaces out,” *trying* to “feel” the connection, to focus or establish some “mystical” relationship to his or her body. Or when a student does not begin to discover the sharp edge of a perceiving consciousness (the mind aspect) implicit in a fully in-incorporated experience of movement as he or she gropes through some culturally-projected romanticized image of “Asia.”¹¹ Blau’s perceptive recollection of this problem should give all students of acting and any bodily-based discipline (such as the Asian martial arts) pause for thought:

For all the justifiable devotion to love’s body, we still need a deeper reverence of the mind’s passion. (“Training! Training! Training!” cried Meyerhold. “But if it’s the kind of training which exercises only the body and not the mind, then no thank you! I have no use for actors who know how to move but can’t think.”) If it becomes easier for actors, or performers or shamans, to be possessed, it becomes harder for them to be intelligent – and, especially intelligent in the act of performance . . . The critical faculty, for all the dissidence, had been abused. All things waste from want of use. “Use your head, can’t you, use your head,” raged Hamm, “you’re on earth, there’s no cure for that.”

(Blau 1976: 22–3)

I want to summarize my argument thus far by rephrasing several of the questions I have been asking. How are we to think and talk about acting if we cannot make “truth” claims about acting and if many of our languages of acting are often rife

with dualistic assumptions? First, we can begin by understanding that *all* languages of acting are highly metaphorical. We should not mistake a discourse *about* acting as a representation of the thing that the discourse attempts to describe – the practice of acting. Second, given the impossibility of ever fully describing acting, all languages of acting are necessarily inadequate and therefore provisional. Thus, all languages of acting need to be constantly (re)considered in relation to the particular context of their use and the degree to which a language can help us to make sense of the complexities of the bodymind's relationship to action/acting, and to the ideology implicit in any kind of acting. And finally, rather than despairing, as did Copeau when he remarked under the weight of scientific objectivism, "At present, I can use only metaphors that my students will not understand, that do not get through to them" (1970: 221), we can celebrate the freedom of not having to find a "universal" language once and for all. Rather we can spend our energy on the continuing challenge of searching for languages of acting which best allow one to actualize a particular paradigm of performance in a particular context for a particular purpose.

Signification, Structure, and the "Problems" of the Subject and Character

One place to begin a search for a more complex way of thinking and talking about acting is semiotics. Semiotics is not a theory of acting *per se*, but a theory of a system of signs. Although the actor cannot *act* on the basis of understanding theatre as a semiotic system, nevertheless, in an era which some define as post-modern,¹² an actor will be ill-equipped even for character acting unless he or she is able to understand not only the relation between semiotics and acting but also what is required in productions where one plays moments which are not motivated psychologically – moments in which an actor's action/gesture/posture might be said to "stand on their own." From a semiotic perspective, in the moment of performance the actor makes meanings (impressions, images) available through the complex network of signs which he or she produces (along with the costumes the actor wears, the space/setting within which he or she acts, etc.). The actor's task is *creating* signs (images etc.), as well as entering those images/actions with an appropriate degree of psychophysical engagement of voice/body/mind to capture, engage, and direct the audience's attention. If meanings and experience are created, they are created partly in the play of signification between the signs produced by the actors and interpretations of those signs made by the spectators.

Since meanings are made collaboratively by the performers and spectators, the actor does not *have* to produce logical, behaviorally motivated, psychological signs for an action to have "meaning" for an audience. Perhaps the best way to illustrate this is by example. When directing Euripides' *Hippolytus* a number of years ago, I instructed the actor playing Hippolytus to open his first scene kneeling, chopping wood with a hatchet. I explained that in the darkness he should take up his kneeling position, grasp the hatchet in his right hand, and the log in his left, and then simply engage himself completely and fully in the act of chopping wood. I further explained that he should use the hatchet in a rhythmically measured but focused manner so that each blow would have a "heavy" quality, and that, once he began to deliver his opening speech, he should set the rhythm and tone of his speech to the chopping. Since, like most American actors at his level of experience, this actor's

primary training had been in various forms of Stanislavskian-based method acting, I was not surprised when he asked what his motivation might be for chopping wood. Although either of us could have invented a motivation for Hippolytus which might have allowed the chopping to “make sense” in motivational terms, we resisted using such language. We worked toward clarity about what the actor’s task was at this moment – “simply” chopping wood.

Were the actor to have insisted on having a psychologically based motivation, his relationship to the action would have had a behavioral inflection giving the action a different signification and quality than what I wanted: a decided act of chopping wood. My intention was for the chopping to be placed before the audience along with the words of his speech. And for the audience to assemble meaning from the words and the relationship of the actor to his physical action. Whether Hippolytus’ chopping “read” well for the audience and whether the meanings and associations that the audience created were those I had intended, are open questions. What the actor and I worked on in this moment was developing a specific energy, focus, psychophysical quality, and timing in his wood chopping. The actor had to negotiate between his own understanding/expectations of what acting is or is not, and the demands of this particular production. He had to develop a network of relationships-in-action between the three sets of demands which any production potentially places on the actor’s approach: (1) the structural, dramaturgical demands of the dramatic text and/or the particular genre of performance (happenings, performance art, etc.); (2) the structural demands of the performance text – how the director (or whoever is shaping the work) determines the *specific* structure of *this* particular performance text; and (3) the relationship between the actor and what the actor does, i.e., the qualitative, psychophysiological dimension of the actor’s engagement in the task-at-hand.

As Dorrine Kondo reminds us (following Derrida), the potential meanings that semiotics points to in performance “can never be fixed, for there is no transcendental signified that commands authority and exists without signifiers or beyond signification. Rather, signification involves a play of signifiers, linked in chains of substitution within systems of difference” (1990: 36). And just as linguistic “truths” and performative “meanings” cannot be “fixed,” so too the actor needs to be aware of the double “problem” of the subject and the character. A positivist metaphysics which assumes the stability of “truth” and “meaning” also assumes the stability of the “subject.” As Kondo points out, in this view, identities are

fixed, bounded entities containing some essence or substance that is expressed in distinctive attributes. This conventional trope opposes “the self” as bounded essence, filled with “real feelings” and identity, to a “world” or to a “society” which is spatially and ontologically distinct from the self.

(Kondo 1990: 33–4)

Studies which critique this point of view highlight the fact that the notion of the “individual personality” as a bounded self is peculiar to post-Cartesian (male) history and is culturally-specific to the West.¹³ Such critiques also attack the common sense notion

that human nature determines identity, that as human beings we are the authors of all that we think and speak, and that as such we shape the world around us and the

knowledges which structure that world. Common sense, then, assumes that the nature of human “being” is given in some way – that it exists *prior* to language simply to label the world of its own experience. Within this framework, the human individual is conceived as a unified center of control from which meaning emanates.

(Easthope and McGowan 1992: 67)

Critics argue that “self” and “identity” are not “god-given human nature,” but are negotiated socio-culturally through time. What is called into question by the problem of the subject is the “hegemonic American assumption about identity and selfhood as a bounded essence containing inner, true feelings” (Kondo 1990: 34).

There are two levels at which the “problem” of the subject is important for the actor: (1) at the aesthetic/structural level – understanding how and why the problem of the subject is altering the way dramatic texts are written, the way characters in novels, films, and plays are represented: how the presumably stable, psychologically whole character is no longer the paradigm of action governing what the actor is asked to perform;¹⁴ (2) understanding how a critique of the “truth” of “inner feelings” throws into question acting theories which either reify personal feelings as the “organic truth and essence” of the actor’s art or reify the actor’s “presence.”¹⁵

The destabilization of the realistic, psychologically “whole” character has come from numerous directions. Many productions since the 1960s attempted to dispense with “character.” Ironically a metaphysics of “presence” which reifies the immediate actor/audience interaction helped to destabilize the “normative” fictional character. In addition, American method acting has been openly defied by the many successful actors (Spalding Gray, Ron Vawter, David Warilow, Rachel Rosenthal, Willem Dafoe, Anna Deavere Smith, etc.) not trained in the method (Savran 1988: 2; Martin, 1993; Schechner 1993a, 1993b), and by the numerous alternative pathways to performance contemporary actors are now following.

As long ago as 1972, Michael Kirby (Chapter 4) attempted to describe the changes taking place in American acting during the 1960s. He argued that, under the influence of happenings, a shift away from character acting toward the not-acting/non-matrixed end of the continuum took place.¹⁶ Keeping in mind Kirby’s continuum, realist productions of realist texts by Chekhov, Ibsen, Williams, etc. assume that the actors play specific roles using a specific technique (usually Stanislavsky-based) to create “fully rounded” characters. As John Harrop says, the text is “a map to action” (1992: 54). Actors trained in the American method often approach characterization by “living the role,” that is, erasing distinctions between “self”/“the real” and the fictional role. Alternatively, a character may be considered a “*dramatic persona*,” a “mask,” or a “fictive construct necessary to the plot structure, [thus] free[ing] the actor from the limiting idea that theatre is reality, rather than a reflection on, or an illusion of, reality” (Harrop 1992: 69).

For those who reject the dramatic text as the “map to action,” the playtext (if used at all) is a point of departure from which the director, collective, and/or actors devise and develop their own performance text which *becomes* the map to the set of actions that the actors will perform either as “themselves” or as fictional characters. Productions of non-realist texts, non-realist productions of realist texts, and/or

non-realist genres of performance often assume some variation on, or alternative to, the paradigm of the Stanislavskian actor/character structure. Several examples should clarify the range of possibilities.

Among contemporary playwrights, the dramatic writing of Samuel Beckett has necessitated the development of new approaches to acting to accommodate the quite different tasks expected of the actor. For example, in many of Samuel Beckett's later plays, such as *Not I* (1972) and *A Piece of Monologue* (1979), there are no recognizable three-dimensional characters to act, and the physical demands made on the performer are often extreme. In *Not I* all that is visible of the primary performance in the "stage in darkness" is Mouth – the illuminated lips of a female mouth located about eight feet above stage level. Once Mouth, seemingly afloat in a sea of black above the audience, begins her non-stop twenty-five minute monologue "... out ... into this world ... this world ... tiny little thing ..." (Beckett 1984: 215) only her lips move as the text is performed at almost break-neck speed "without color" as Billie Whitelaw describes it, i.e., without the usual range of vocal inflections used in character acting (Whitelaw 1995: 200). Mouth in *Not I* and Speaker in *Piece of Monologue* constantly shift from first person to third person observation as each describes their physical/existential condition at the moment of speaking, as when Speaker conjures a life – his life – between birth and death:

Birth was the death of him. Again. Words are few. Dying too ... Stands there staring beyond waiting for first word. It gathers in his mouth. Birth. Parts lips and thrusts tongue between them. Tip of tongue. Feel soft touch of tongue on lips. Of lips on tongue.

(Beckett 1984: 267–8).

As Beckett said of James Joyce's work, concerns with pattern, form, and detail make such acting "not *about* something ... [but] *that thing itself*" (quoted in Kalb 1989: 3). Form becomes content; content is form. But as I have described here (Chapter 15) and elsewhere (Zarrilli 1997), the actor must develop a psychophysical process, tactics, and mode of engaging images different from most approaches to character acting in order to fulfil the rigorous demands of an embodied inhabitation of form and content. Laurie Lassiter (Chapter 25) provides a detailed account of how the actor, David Warrilow for whom Beckett originally wrote *Piece of Monologue*, developed such an approach in which he is as much a musician as an actor.

In addition to the different demands of playwrights like Beckett, new directorial approaches or ways of structuring the tasks of the actor require new approaches to acting. For example, my 1989 (*Playing*) *The Maids* (Figure 2.1) was an adaptation/production of Genet's *The Maids*. The production was played between and among four casts/stages/styles, all of whom were onstage throughout the performance. One was a high baroque style played in bald-caps and sumptuous gowns, the second played in grand *kabuki* style, the third with a chic slicked-back "leather"-MTV-watching cast, and the fourth a roving band of rod puppeteers subversively commenting on the action and/or mockingly quoting the high-seriousness of the play and our production. The assistant director and I were seated in the midst of the semi-environmentally located three stages linked by runways. From this obvious spot, I cued the actors with *kabuki*-style clapper blocks when it was their turn to



Fig. 2.1 (*Playing*) *The Maids*, the 1989 production in which actors apply their work in Asian martial/meditation arts to performance. Pictured here from the left are Denise Myers as the *kabuki* Solange, Duane Krause as the *kabuki* Madame (above), George Czarnicki as the baroque Claire, and Rhonda Reeves as the baroque Solange.

play a scene. At least four actors played each role. The actors' approach to sharing roles required that they develop not only their own version of the character but also a "collective" character. "Playing" *The Maids* meant that sometimes one actor "passed" the role of Solange on to *another* stage and actor – requiring the ability to "give" the role to another actor. These and other conventions obviously made specific demands on the actors which were very different from the demands of playing a character in a realist production. However, there still were identifiable (if shared) characters, namely Claire, Solange, and Madame, as well as a series of roles which emerged from rehearsals: Madame's Lover, a Bob Barker type of television game-show host, a Vanna White look-alike, a Member of the Audience, and the director and assistant director.

Another example of alternative structures and tasks of acting are those made for actor-dancers in the *kathakali* dance-drama of Kerala, India. In *Kalyana Saugandhikam*, the actor-dancer playing the heroic Bhima sets off on a journey through the jungles in search of the Saugandhikam flower to bring to his beloved wife, Draupadi. The actor-dancer performs an hour-long “interpolation” into the dramatic narrative. Without a change in costume or make-up, the actor serially plays an elephant, lion, and serpent as he enacts what Bhima sees: a ferocious fight between these three animals. In *kathakali*, the paradigm of acting assumes that the actor-dancer not only plays a role or character but also can play a series of characters side-by-side as he enacts a story nested within the main dramatic narrative. The work of performers such as Dario Fo (Chapter 20), Rachel Rosenthal (Chapter 23), and Anna Deavere Smith (Chapter 27) is similar to what happens in *kathakali*. These and other monologists or solo performances enact multiple roles sequentially. What differentiates the *kathakali* actor’s sequence of roles from that of Fo, Rosenthal, Deavere Smith and the like is that in *kathakali* the sequence remains part of a narrative within a larger narrative, while Fo, Rosenthal, and Deavere Smith self-consciously juxtapose one role/persona against another for specific political and ideological reasons.¹⁷

Two of many alternative approaches to contemporary acting are those of Ruth Maleczech, a co-founder of Mabou Mines in the U.S., and Teresa Ralli’s work with the Peruvian theatre company, Grupo Yuyachkani. Working with an aesthetic and performance structure more like musical composition than a play-text in which the various theatrical elements are intentionally always open-ended, Mabou Mines has developed an approach Maleczech defines as a series of tracks: picture, gesture, sound, movement, psychology, pitch, rhythm, music, tableau, lighting, etc. Any of these elements can be used to carry forward the story, and at any given moment the performer can jump from one track to another. This approach is driven not by objectives or desire, but images – a process Maleczech describes as “like running a marathon” (Sonenberg 1996: 90).

Grupo Yuyachkani envision their “thinking actor” as “multiple”, i.e., one who sings, dances, and plays musical instruments (Sonenberg 1996: 124). Their process begins with the body, utilizing *t’ai chi ch’uan* to explore energy work and its flow in movement and voice – ongoing explorations applied anew in each performance. Physical exercises are structures which allow the actor to develop an understanding of a beginning, middle, and end. The actor’s body addresses real, concrete tasks in space. Ralli approaches each new performance as physical poetry, utilizing images rather than emotions as her entry point into the process.

Johannes Birringer, in his study of postmodern theatre and performance (1991), describes the work of a number of performance artists and directors who believe that the actor should not “enact” a character, role, or persona, but rather should perform a series of actions which are signs within the total semiotic and imagistic field of the *mise-en-scene*: Kirby’s “non-matrixed” performances. For example, Birringer describes Laurie Anderson’s performance body as one through which the spectator’s “attention stays on the surface of the staged signs, and as Anderson manipulates the media that can alter her appearance [. . .] she becomes another surface in a visual-aural design across which indefinite meanings traverse and cancel each other out” (Birringer 1991: 30). The pleasure in Anderson’s performances

is her ironic use of a “technoscape.” Similarly, in Robert Wilson’s spectacles, Birringer describes the performances as

both abstracted – they are pictorial lines drawn onto the surface, moved, and then frozen to be redrawn – and presented as positions or numbers within a visual and auditory configuration . . . In this sense, Wilson’s theatre effects a radical repositioning of the human body: within the multiple transparent superimpositions of images, the body is not privileged but treated as one material, one cipher, among others.

(Birringer 1991: 224)

Clearly the psychologically whole “character” is no long central to many types of contemporary theatre since the 1960s, such as the deconstructive work of The Wooster Group (Chapter 24) or Robert Wilson’s spectacular theatre of images in the U.S. (Chapter 26); the fragmentary, thought-provoking, time-based task performances of Forced Entertainment in the U.K.; or in Japan the strong psychophysical recreation of Western classics by Tadashi Suzuki’s company (Chapter 13), and the dynamic *butoh* dance, have dispensed with the conventional playing of “characters”. What the actor/performer “does” onstage today ranges from a psychologically motivated realist character, through a character-structure into and out of which the actor steps on a moment-to-moment basis, to the sequential playing of multiple roles or personae, to the play of roles or sequences of action which require the development of a specific relationship to the audience as a part of one’s score, to the enactment of tasks or entry into images without any characterological implications.

Semiotics may alert the actor to the intricacies of the relationships among the performed actions that generate meanings and to the diverse approaches in contemporary theatre to structuring potential meanings and experiences, but it does not provide an adequate account of either the actor’s experience or that of an audience. The various actor’s journeys I have described in the above examples may not be explainable in stereotypical, behavioral, character-based acting terms; however, this does not mean that the actor is not following an inner journey which ideally engages an audience experientially by capturing their attention, engaging their awarenesses as well as emotional and aesthetic sensibilities.

For the actor, whatever the actions and tasks to be performed, these are the “material” conditions of his or her work. By means of these material conditions not only are meanings and experiences created for, by, and with the spectators, but also for the actor. The actor’s “who I am” cannot be divorced from the “who *we* are.” Individual and collective identities form a negotiable dialectic within the arena of performance practice.

3

THE ACTOR'S PRESENCE

Three phenomenal modes

Bert O. States

One way of approaching the phenomenology of the actor is to consider him as a kind of storyteller whose speciality is that he *is* the story he is telling. Presumably, the transitional “voice” between the true storyteller and the actor would be the rhapsode who tells his story (or rather someone else’s) directly to the audience, simulating the more exciting parts of it in the manner of the First Player in *Hamlet*, who gets so carried away by the plight of Hecuba. With the actor, of course, the narrative voice (“Anon he finds him striking too short at Greeks”) disappears entirely, and we hear only the fictitious first-personal voice (“Now I am alone,” or “Now, mother, what’s the matter?”) – rather, we *overhear* it, since the voice is no longer speaking to us. The audience is now an implicit or unacknowledged “you,” at least in the more naturalistic styles of acting. This is, of course, what bothered Rousseau so much, that the actor was the final step in the disintegration of presence and direct discourse.¹

I cite this familiar evolution only so that we might regain some sense of the narrator hiding in the actor, just as there is an actor hiding in the rhapsode. What distinguishes the First Player in the Pyrrhus speech from the complete actor he will become that same evening in *The Murder of Gonzago* is simply that in one case he is carried away *by* a fiction and in the other he is carried away *in*, or *as*, a fiction: in one case he envisions, in the other he *becomes*. In either case, the indispensable personal pronominal order of all discourse holds: speaker (I), spoken to (you), and spoken of (he). We can make better sense of this idea if we put it in the form of a chart opposing the world of the theatre and the fictional world of the play along the pronominal axis. Since Jiri Veltrusky has already given us terms for these two “worlds,” let us refer to them as “the acting event” and “the enacted event” (1978: 572):

THEATRE (Acting event)			PLAY (Enacted event)		
Actor	=	I	=	Character	
Audience	=	you	=	Other characters or self	
Character	=	he (it)	=	Absent character or events	

The Play column speaks for itself: characters in a play speak, as we do in life, to each other (dialogue) or to themselves (soliloquy) about events or about people (usually absent). The Theatre column, however, requires a shift in perspective on the speech process. In sum: the actor (I) speaks to the audience (you) about the character (he) that he is playing. By extension, the ensemble of actors in any play would constitute the plural number of this same order of speech (we-you-they). But how is this possible? How does the actor speak to the audience *about* the character he is playing?

Immediately we see that the I of the actor is not at all the I of the character he is playing, the voice that keeps saying “I, I, I” throughout the play. The actor’s first person is what appears before us *as* the character, the being that has, in effect, no voice of its own but whose very presence and way of appearing constitute the act of direct speech within the indirect speech in the enacted event. It is visible in the effortless hard work that produces on the actor’s brow beads of perspiration that may not belong to the character. But the I is not simply the actor’s real body. It is rather the *unnatural* attitude of the body, the thousand different means and behavioral peculiarities by which the actor unavoidably remains just outside the character he is playing. He is always slightly “quoting” his character, though not as Brecht’s actor practices quoting – that is, not as a consciously estranged style. Even if he is quoting in the Brechtian sense there is a quotation beyond this quotation. No matter how he acts, there is always the ghost of a self in his performance.

This idea of theatre as an act of speech allows us to see how the actor’s relationship to the audience may shift “keys” during a performance or, on the longer range, as culture makes different demands on the theatre as a reflection of its concerns. In effect, the actor has three pronominal modes in which he may speak to the audience, and they are modes – not styles – that cover all possibilities simply because they are all that discourse contains. Our chart would now look like this:

I (actor)	=	Self-expressive mode
You (audience)	=	Collaborative mode
He (character)	=	Representational mode

Before defining and exemplifying these modes I must emphasize that in treating the actor as a speaker I also have in mind the audience as listener. Any speaker-listener relationship is a two-way street, and the listener may hear *selectively* what he *wants* to hear or what he *thinks* he hears. In other words, it is not a simple matter of following the “intention” of the speaker but of abandoning one’s senses to the shifting appeals of the speech (and the actor’s speech, of course, should be understood to include gesture, presence, and all the aspects of his performance of the role). Above all, I want to avoid any suggestion that my modes have anything *at all* to do with style, or *necessarily* to do with sudden and conscious shifts in the actor’s deportment whereby we now perceive him in one mode of listening and now in another. We are interested only in trying to approximate the range of the actor/audience relationship; and it is simply not sufficient to say that the actor performs in various styles (declamatory, naturalistic, Romantic, estranged, etc.) or, beyond style, that the audience’s perception of the actor is exhausted in his “dual” nature as actor and character. But I can make this clear only by examining the modes themselves.

THE SELF-EXPRESSIVE MODE

Let us begin by treating them as *pure* modes of performance. In the self-expressive mode the actor *seems* to be performing on his own behalf. He says, in effect, “*See what I can do.*” One might say that certain roles encourage the self-expressive tendency (Cyrano, Faust, Falstaff, Hamlet, Lear, Medea), either because they are so demanding or because they have been deliberately designed as vehicles for the release of the actor’s power (the part of Cyrano, for example, was written as a show-piece for Coquelin). Moreover, certain authors (usually the “classic” poets of the art) encourage the self-expressive mode. There is no better way to illustrate this idea than to quote Hazlitt on the occasion of Kean’s appearance in *Richard II* in 1815:

It may be asked, then, why all great actors choose characters from Shakespeare to come out in; and again, why these become their favourite parts? First, it is not that they are able to exhibit their author, but that he enables them to show themselves off. The only way in which Shakespeare appears to greater advantage on the stage than common writers is that he stimulates the faculties of the actor more. If he is a sensible man, he perceives how much he has to do, the inequalities he has to contend with, and he exerts himself accordingly; he puts himself at full speed, and lays all his resources under contribution; he attempts more, and makes a greater number of brilliant failures; he does all he can, and bad is often the best.

(Hazlitt quoted in Archer and Lowe, n.d.: 51)

Converting Hazlitt to our own purposes, we might interpret the actor’s decision to play “big parts” such as Lear or Richard as a self-expressive act in which he “bets” the audience that he is actor enough to fill the character’s shoes. On its part the audience goes to the theatre to “see Kean,” Hazlitt continues, rather than to see the character Kean is impersonating. I am not suggesting that this is the only motive in playing and play going, only that the great “classical” plays (particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, when they are more frequently on the boards) seem to charge the theatrical event with the electricity of competition between actor and character. In other words, they invited the actor to put himself “at full speed,” and to the extent that one went to the theatre to see Kean or Macready or Mrs Siddons at full speed one would be “listening” in the self-expressive mode.

As another variation, a play might be deliberately converted into a self-expressive vehicle – as in the “star system” or in the *Hamlet* productions of Charlotte Cushman, Sarah Bernhardt and Judith Anderson. Certain speeches in plays call for a high degree of self-expressiveness (the opening of *Richard III*, Hotspur’s Popinjay speech, Mercutio’s Mab speech). In this sense, opera, dance, and mime are the major self-expressive forms of theatre. Whatever they are *about* is always less important than what they display. The best-known example is the opera soprano who is not expected to “disappear” into her role as a dying tubercular because it is impossible to sing properly and die properly at the same time. Likewise, in dance, what story there is exists less as an illusion than as a display case for a series of demanding solo variations. The secondary role played by verisimilitude in these forms is confirmed by the fact that the performer steps completely out of the illusion and bows to the audience’s applause when the solo is over. And so with mime, which is essentially an act of defining an invisible world in terms of the visible body. We do not see the walls of Marcel Marceau’s prison or the stairs he

ascends or the wind he leans into; his body opens onto the structure of these things in a display of the artist's ability to do without them.

In dramatic theatre, putting aside the great roles and the great poetic arias, self-expressiveness asserts itself in the form of vignettes, cameo "moments," *lazzi*, or, more generally, in the actor's particular stylistic signature: Garrick's kaleidoscope of facial expressions, Edward Alleyn's thunder, Edmund Kean's "flashes of lightning," Mrs Siddons' majesty, Duse's restraint, Bernhardt's Bernhardt, finally Brando's (then everyone's) realer realism. Veltrusky mentions the passage in *My Life in Art* where Stanislavsky talks about the Russian actor, Sadovsky, who had a particular piece of "business" that contains the essence of the actor's self-enlargement of his role: he "suddenly stopped in the middle of a sentence to portray the character feeling in his mouth for a hair from his fur collar, and went on for a long time moving his tongue around and 'trying to take the hair out' with his fingers while the sentence he had begun remained unfinished" (Veltrusky 1978: 57). What is the interest in this search for a hair? In life it would be unremarkable, if not vulgar; on the stage, memorable. It is exactly the revelation of something hitherto sub-theatrical, not simply "realism" but an audacious display of the actor's power to be "real" on the micro-level. In such a moment (assuming it is well done) the actor says, in effect, "You have all searched for a hair: let me show you, comically, what this search amounts to." I suggest it is the essence of the actor's self-enlargement for another reason: here the sentence the actor is speaking might be said to stand for the conventional flow of theatre action; everything is going along "as written." But suddenly the flow is broken, a fissure opens, and out pops a new delight, a slice of human behavior that exists, in cameo, for its own sake. It is not that the actor steps out of character in such moments but that he finds the fissure in the text that allows him to make his unique contribution: he self-creates the real ground of his character's ideality.

It is plain that the self-expressive mode cannot be contained in stylistic terms. It is our awareness of the artist in the actor. The rationale for positing such a mode of performance is that there ought to be a word, or a way of isolating, something as powerful as the pleasure we take when artistry becomes the object of our attention. In opera, dance, and mime the artist is almost constantly this object. In view of theatre's strong illusionary mission, the actor is less so: he comes in and out of focus as an artist; now we see the character, now the artist in a "moment of genius" or, conversely, the unshielded actor in a moment of flaw. But even in theatre there are degrees of artist-presence. We always recognize Olivier in Hamlet or Olivier behind the dark paint of Othello. But this is not what is meant by artist-presence; this is simply actor-presence. The distinction is roughly that between *doing* and *being*: when the artist in the actor comes forth, we are reacting to the actor's particular way of *doing* his role. Our awareness of the artist is likely to surface at certain "peaks" in a performance when the character given to the actor by the dramatist is endowed with its perfect personality. It is not that the personality is less perfect elsewhere, simply that a character of almost any kind, from Osric to Hamlet, contains countless openings for "solo variation." There is always a potential interstice in the text. A character, Diderot says, is an "ideal type." Within the range of a certain typology one can imagine Hamlet doing and being many things that are not written into his character. What a dramatic text offers the actor is an ideal portrait, an abstraction, that can be made real in a thousand ways.

Let us take two instances from theatre history that will dramatize the range of the actor's self-expressiveness. There are actors whose genius rests in the fact that they "play themselves." This is not entirely the metaphor it may seem. Kean was obviously such an actor, an idea that Sartre develops very wittily in his play about Kean. Another was Sarah Bernhardt and I can think of no better way to document the self-ostentatious side of the self-expressive mode than to quote Arthur Symons' brilliant description of Bernhardt at work:

The art of Sarah Bernhardt has always been a very conscious art, but it so spoke to us, once, that it was difficult to analyse it coldly. She was *Phèdre* or Marguerite Gautier, she was Adrienne Lecouvreur, Fedora, La Tosca, the actual woman, and she was also that other actual woman, Sarah Bernhardt. Two magics met and united, in the artist and the woman, each alone of its kind. There was an excitement in going to the theatre; one's pulses beat feverishly before the curtain had risen; there was almost a kind of obscure sensation of peril, such as one feels when the lioness leaps into the cage, on the other side of the bars. And the acting was like a passionate declaration, offered to some one unknown; it was as if the whole nervous force of the audience were sucked out of it and flung back, intensified, upon itself, as it encountered the single, insatiable, indomitable nervous force of the woman. And so, in its way, this very artificial acting seemed the mere instinctive, irresistible expression of a temperament; it mesmerised one, awakening the senses and sending the intelligence to sleep.

(Symons 1927: 151)

Who could go to see *Phèdre* or *La Dame aux Camelias* and become lost in the illusion in the presence of this energy? "It is all sheer acting," Symons says. What is it, then, that Bernhardt *does* to the text? Where does she find its interstices?

The first thing one notices in her acting, when one is free to watch it coolly, is the way in which she subordinates effects to effect. She has her crescendos, of course, and it is these which people are most apt to remember, but the extraordinary force of these crescendos comes from the smooth and level manner in which the main part of the speaking is done. She is not anxious to make points at every moment, to put all the possible emphasis into every separate phrase; I have heard her glide over really significant phrases which, taken by themselves, would seem to deserve more consideration, but which she has wisely subordinated to an overpowering effect of ensemble. Sarah Bernhardt's acting reminds me of a musical performance. . . . [She] is always the actress as well as the part; when she is at her best, she is both equally, and our consciousness of the one does not disturb our possession by the other. When she is not at her best, we see only the actress, the incomparable craftswoman openly labouring at her work.

(Symons 1927: 154–5)

On the other end of the same spectrum we find Eleanora Duse who, on occasion, played the same roles as Bernhardt in different theatres of the same city, and nightly she performed only the miracle of her own disappearance. Overall, as a stylist, Duse's acting would be best studied as an example of the third-personal, or representational mode of performance. But she had her moments, her crescendos, in which the disappearance was so complete that the artist reappeared on the other side of the "illusion" – that is to say, stunned the audience with the fidelity of the artifice. Shaw relates such a moment in her performance of Magda in *Suderman's*

Home. In the third act Magda must face the unexpected arrival of the father of her child in her own father's living room. It is a moment of extreme tension and she (Magda, the character) gets through it "pretty well," Shaw says, but just when her composure seems to be returning and she seems safely over the embarrassment and shock.

a terrible thing happened to her. She began to blush; and in another moment she was conscious of it, and the blush was slowly spreading and deepening until, after a few vain efforts to avert her face or to obstruct his view of it without seeming to do so, she gave up and hid the blush in her hands. After that feat of acting I did not need to be told why Duse does not paint an inch thick. I could detect no trick in it: it seemed to me a perfectly genuine effect of the dramatic imagination. In the third act of *La Dame aux Camélias*, where she produces a touching effect by throwing herself down, and presently rises with her face changed and flushed with weeping, the flush is secured by the preliminary plunge to a stooping attitude, imagination or no imagination; but Magda's blush did not admit of that explanation; and I must confess to an intense professional curiosity as to whether it always comes spontaneously.

(Shaw 1931: xxiii, 162)

What occurs to one while reading these two reports of "great moments" in the theatre is the marvel of our sensitivity to that zone of behavior within which the act of acting takes place. To recognize the natural progress of a blush as a "feat of acting" one must be able to hold in mind two categories – that of the real and that of the imaginary – that are fused in a single phenomenon. How does one see it as art when the art consists precisely in making it real? Of course Shaw is hardly an average theatregoer, but surely he is describing something about Duse that brought audiences to the theatre to see her. In fact, here we have a direct window into "the end of playing": Duse does not fool us into taking her for Magda any more than Bernhardt, for the simple reason that a theatre is not a palace of illusion. Sartre puts it neatly: the actor "draws his pride in the fact that he would not be admired for 'being' the character so well unless everyone, starting precisely with himself, knew that he was not" (1976: 165–6). So we do see style at all times; it simply emerges more "beautifully" at certain times than others. Symons and Shaw were stunned by Bernhardt and Duse. They are both "great actresses" not because they draw us perceptually into the imaginary but because they present the real in nearly pure form, the fictions of Magda and Phèdre being a means to this end. It would be wrong, of course, to dismiss the imaginary element of performance, and it is true that both Symons and Shaw could easily have written about the characters being played by Bernhardt and Duse without reference to the means through which they were communicated. But, as it happens, they were describing the art in the actress and how it exists as the object of our attention: Duse quietly hides herself in the character; Bernhardt converts the character into "the expression of a temperament." In Duse's case the wonder is that the woman understood the character so well, and could force her soul so to her own conceit that she could become the woman she played without, so to speak, selling her soul in the process. In Bernhardt's case the wonder is that the woman could elevate artificiality ("sheer acting") to such an intense level that she herself devours the imaginary and "substitutes" herself (as Shaw says) for the character.

THE COLLABORATIVE MODE

I would prefer a less clumsy term than collaborative for the second personal mode of performance, but it suggests the main idea: to break down the distance between actor and audience and to give the spectator something more than a passive role in the theatre exchange. The invitation to collaborate varies, of course, from the implicit to the explicit, and from the token to the literal; the guiding characteristic is that the stage uses some form of the “you” address in its relation to the audience. One could think of this as a “we” voice in the sense that the audience joins the actors in the stage enterprise, but I prefer to retain the strict sense of “you” as the *spoken to* in the act of speech. In short, if “we” speaks to itself, it subdivides into “I” and “you.” In general, this mode may be symbolized by the comic “aside” which presumes that the audience is complicitous in the setting of traps and deceptions – or, to put it another way, the actor plays a character who lives in a world that includes the audience. For the most part, this is only a fictional assumption the play now and then indulges through certain characters (typically the clever servant), since it would be difficult for comedy to get anything done if it had to include the audience in all the developments. Besides, the actor who plays *to* the audience in the aside or the monologue is usually well within the play world, since the audience he addresses is only the idea of an audience. The audience actually has the status of a *confidant* character in neo-classical tragedy, unlike the *real* audience that modern participation theatre tries to involve quite literally in the play. But the comic aside, together with the conventional prologue and epilogue, suggests a generic liberty that most comedy takes with its audience. The current of this liberty is not simply reference to the audience, but the comic project itself: the production of laughter.

A useful way to discuss the collaborative mode of performance is to contrast the relation of comedy and tragedy, as polar opposites, to their audiences. We often say that comedy arouses laughter and tragedy tears. The fact is, it is melodrama that arouses tears: tragedy arouses silence. The point of the distinction is that tragedy is a non-collaborative form, as usually performed. Tragedy creates an empathic experience wherein we are dissolved in what could be called a magnificent loneliness, felt most deeply in the absolute stillness of the auditorium when tragic characters say such things as “Thou shalt come no more.” What the audience shares in such moments, and in the play at large, is less important than what isolates each spectator vicariously in the experience. Each spectator may be feeling roughly the same thing, and the actors may know that the whole house is, as Hamlet says, “wonder-wounded,” but it is a private thing, as metaphysical experience usually is, and the tragic play makes no non-representational provision for exploiting it. What tragedy tends to give us, at the end, is a surrogate audience of survivors on stage who act out the emotion occurring in the auditorium. A line such as Kent’s “Break, heart; I prithee, break!” serves as a lightning rod that grounds our own emotional investment in the play.

Obviously it is wrong to say that tragedy does not openly acknowledge its audience. In its evolution out of the morality play Elizabethan tragedy never gave up its theatrical self-awareness. Characters such as Aaron, Edmund, and Iago talk easily to the pit, or at least to the convention of the pit. But it is notable that they are all villains and planners of deceit and that they have much in common with the clown in the tragic subplot. In fact, the only characters in tragedy who “work” with the

audience seem to be clowns and villains. This practice, moreover, is not restricted to Elizabethan drama. Humor and treachery seem to gravitate naturally toward the footlights – humor because it is incomplete without the audience and treachery because it is not necessary to waste good play time motivating it if the villain can have the audience's blessing. The Elizabethan villain, like his descendant the nineteenth-century landlord villain, is what Kenneth Burke calls the playwright's playwright. He seems to say to us, "Pretend I'm just plain evil. If I am not interesting myself, I will be the cause of your interest in the others." Apart from Shakespeare's master-villains, who could hardly be called uninteresting, it is hard to feel anything for characters who are on such easy terms with us because they do not seem to be undergoing anything but a play. They exist, one might say, in a limbo on the audience side of tragic seriousness. It would be unthinkable for a character such as Lear or Macbeth – or even Hamlet, who is brother to the clown – to peer familiarly into the pit because there is something in the abridgement of aesthetic distance that gives the lie to tragic character and pathos. A character who addresses the audience immediately takes on some of the audience's objectivity and superiority to the play's world. This is true even of modern narrator-protagonists such as Arthur Miller's Quentin and Williams's Tom Wingfield. They have survived tragedy, like Horatio, and as the line goes in Lear, it is not the worst as long as you are alive to say it was the worst.

In cathartic terms, laughter is the dialectical opposite of tragic silence. As everyone knows, it is hard to laugh in a half-empty theatre, and it is even harder to act the comedy that is supposed to release the laughter. In one of his letters to B, Kierkegaard asks his friend, "Answer me honestly . . . : do you ever really laugh when you are alone?" He concludes that you have to be "a little more than queer" if you do (1959: Vol. II, 331–2). It follows that the genre that produces laughter for its living is the most social of all the dramatic forms, except possibly the masque, just as tragedy is the most non-social, at least from the standpoint of emotional logic. Tragedy, the early Lukacs says, is "a science of death moments, of conscious last moments when the soul has already given up the broad richness of existence and clings only to what it most deeply and intimately owns" (1974: 161). Comedy, one might add, is a science of life-moments, of assurance that the broad richness of existence is all that really matters and that death can always be deferred. I am not assigning the performance of all comedy to the collaborative mode but suggesting only that comedy, as an extension of its theme, encourages the rapprochement of art and audience in a way that tragedy, as an extension of its theme, does not. This social principle does not stop with comedy proper: comedy's next-door neighbors are realism and irony, and what energizes both irony and realism is the critique of social life that rests at the base of comedy. For example, I originally thought of the Brechtian actor as performing primarily in the self-expressive mode because he was, to a noticeable degree, *still* a performer standing just outside of his role. But this is not really self-expressiveness in the sense that the performance, the virtuosity, is the center of attention; this detachment, or coming forth, of the Brecht actor is a strategy for keeping the spectator on the objective wave-length in his "hearing" of the play. Moreover, the Brecht actor, as Paul Hernadi writes, "must no doubt identify with the author or the director at least as much as he identifies with 'himself,' the psychophysical substratum of the character he is playing" (1976: 133). In other words, if he remains a performer, he is a *company* performer. Obviously, the

Brecht actor can find all sorts of self-expressive fissures in the Brecht text, but as an actor who has a distinctly non-representational relation to the audience, he works primarily in the collaborative mode.

By an obvious association, we might draw an analogy between the second-personal voice and the epic, which we would oppose to the first-personal (or self-expressive) lyric. Perhaps Frye's term *epos*, or a work of oral address, is more appropriate. But I am thinking of epic as the form in which the poet speaks to his countrymen about national matters. He usually uses the third-personal, or narrative, point of view ("Then Hector rose up and slew them all"), but implicit in the manner of the exchange is the familiarity and "sacredness" of the matter. The epic addresses an audience of the initiated, for there would be little point in an epic poet singing about the heroic feats of another nation. As a form we have adapted to the theatre, we would probably have to assign most epic acting (of, say, Shakespeare's *Roses octology*) to the third, or representational mode, along with tragedy. But Brecht's actor is peculiar in that he wants to speak to his countrymen about "national" matters they *should* hear about but, for the most part, *not emulate*. In other words, he wants to expel something from national character. So he speaks to them, as we have said, schizophrenically, with a self-criticism about what he is doing as a character. Hence he aligns the audience empathically with his critical self, not the self he is portraying. It is a strategy similar to that of the preacher who says, "I stand before you a sinner," the confession itself serving to "alienate" him from his sin. As Brecht uses it, this strategy is substantively ironic: it is a way of denouncing your sin in the act of performing it. But comedy is never far off in Brecht's world.

Is it possible to have theatre by speaking directly to the audience, bypassing the entire pretense of representation and self-expression? This is the assumption of Peter Handke's *Offending the Audience*. Ostensibly, this "play" denies that it belongs to any category of theatre performance. The four "speakers" are not actors; they act nothing, they do not speak to each other, and they do not speak for themselves, as characters ("Our speaking is our acting"). There is no plot, no scenery ("These boards don't signify a world. They are part of the world"). There is no lighting arrangement that isolates the speakers from the audience. Everything that typifies and nourishes theatre has been eliminated except the structure of the actor/audience relationship, and the content of the play is devoted to reversing even this vestige of theatre. In effect, the purpose of the play is not to offend the audience but to make the audience the hero, the event, and the topic.

Can this be called a play? The answer is: of course. The actors have not departed the stage to be replaced by "speakers." The actors are simply representing speakers who are denying they are actors. And there is scenery in the conspicuous absence of scenery. And there is lighting that is perfectly adequate to the purpose of shedding light on the master peripety of the play: the audience's "recognition" that it has, in old-fashioned tragic-comic terms, had the tables turned on it. In short, there is pretense all over the piece. If a Handke actor were to forget his lines he would be in the same pickle as the Brechtian or any other actor. And Handke is wonderfully aware of all this. In fact, one of his speakers says, "this piece is classical," without spelling out just how classical it is.

The originality of the play lies in what we might call its "you-ness," or the particular level on which the rapprochement of audience and actor is effected. I

doubt very much whether Rousseau would have appreciated Handke's project, but there is a passage in Derrida's essay on Rousseau that is as descriptive of what *Offending the Audience* is up to as it is of Rousseau's longing for a spectacle of "presence":

But what is a stage which presents nothing to the sight? It is the place where the spectator, presenting himself as spectacle, will no longer be either seer [*voyant*] or voyeur, will efface within himself the difference between the actor and the spectator, the represented and the representer, the object seen and the seeing object. With that difference, an entire series of oppositions will deconstitute themselves one by one. Presence will be full, not as an object which is *present* to be seen, to give itself to intuition as an empirical unit or as an *eidos* holding itself *in front of* or *up against*; it will be full as the intimacy of a self-presence, as the consciousness or the sentiment of self-proximity, of self-sameness [*propriété*]

(Derrida 1980: 306)

And, in fact, the you-ness turns out to be a kind of me-ness. The strange thing is that the speakers do not become intimate with the audience in *manner* but in *matter*. They always treat the audience as an assembled group but they increasingly refer to those aspects of individual privacy – blinking, breathing, swallowing, sitting, smelling, sweating – that are irresistible attention-getters because speech has become a kind of anatomical probe ("Why, how terribly self-conscious you are"). In other words, if someone says to you, "You've got food on your chin," the body instantly drops whatever else it is doing and deals with that problem. This is the most "offensive" part of the show, but as the speakers say, being offensive, in any context, is a good way to "tear down a wall."

The whole process of the play is a disgorging of theatre into the world. The play is a prologue, it tells us, to the rest of the audience's life:

It is not the prologue to another piece but the prologue to what you did, what you are doing, and what you will do. You are the topic. This piece is the prologue to the topic. It is the prologue to your practices and customs. It is the prologue to your actions. It is the prologue to your inactivity. It is the prologue to your lying down, to your sitting, to your standing, to your walking. It is the prologue to the plays and to the seriousness of your life. It is also the prologue to your future visits to the theatre. It is also the prologue to all other prologues. This piece is world theatre.

(Handke 1969: 28)²

The logic here is much like that of Brecht's theatre of alienation: to send the audience back to the world with a new awareness. But there is nothing political about Handke's program. What his play has attempted to do, as prologue, is to transfer the audience's normal attentiveness to the theatre event back upon itself, back into the world of pre- and post-theatrical life. It is not a program that is likely to work beyond the trip home, any more than Brecht's or any other socially revisionary program. But that is not what concerns us here. *Offending the Audience* carries the collaborative principle to an intricate extreme, and it is an excellent tool for opening up the nature of the theatre process and experience to students who have not thought much about the phenomenal relation of theatre to living or of play to audience. For Handke's play defines theatre as it dismantles it, and it creates theatre as it claims to devastate its premises. As Douglas Hofstadter might say,

there is a “strange looniness” about it. That is, as the speakers strip away one level of theatre after another, leaving the audience in this state of self-enlightenment, “we unexpectedly find ourselves right back where we started” – in the theatre (1980: 10). Handke, like Godel in mathematics, is using theatre self-referentially, as an explanation of what it is and how it works. With the right performers – and certainly the right audience – it might do to one’s emotions what the Epimenides paradox (“This sentence is false”) does to the head.

THE REPRESENTATIONAL MODE

The general idea of the representational mode is implicit in much of what we have said about the others. In effect, the self-expressive and the collaborative modes of speaking and listening display theatre in its extroverted personality or what we might call its courtship plumage. In one case, the performer comes forth and astonishes us with the possibilities of virtuosity; in the other, theatre says to the spectator, “Why should we pretend that all this is an illusion. We are in this together. We are doing this for you.” Perhaps the more persistent source of theatre’s seductive power is the drama of its subject, or, to use Aristotle’s term in a very loose sense, its *praxis*. Theatre’s endless mission is to be “about” something, not about men but about their actions, wherein they are happy or unhappy. Theatre is, after all, representation, and all that I have said here by way of adjusting our perspective on the mimetic principle does not reduce its importance, even in the case of opera or the mime. One could argue that dance, in some of its modern forms, does not require a subject to-be-imitated: for example, a dance called “Variations on Sphericity.” But the success of your argument would depend on how well you could prove that sphericity itself, as a pattern of organization the body submits itself to, was not a subject of representation.

Behind the representational mode of performance, and our perception of it, is the shared sense that we come to the theatre primarily to see a play, not a performance. Continuing my analogy of the self-expressive with the lyric and the collaborative with the epic, we might describe the representational as the *dramatic* of theatrical presentation – the key of *he*, *she*, *it*, and *they* – in which we look in objectively on a “drama” with a beginning, middle, and end that is “occurring” before our eyes. All of the actor’s artistic energies now seem to be bent toward “becoming” his character and, for the audience, they cease to be artistic energies and become the facts of his character’s nature. It has nothing to do with credulity; the audience simply sees through the “sign language” of the art to the “signified” beyond. The play is not a text, classic or brand new, out of which theatre “magic” can be made; it is now an enactment of significant human experience. Even if the play is the most trivial comedy, it is something we can “disappear into” because it is *about* people (who are, now and then, both trivial and funny). So the virtuosity now lies in the power of the subject, the collaboration in the mutual agreement by actor and audience on the value and appropriateness of the subject to the community of men.

Before moving into the representational mode, I should emphasize that my treatment of these three modes as if they occurred *purely* is strictly a convenience of definition. It is precisely our ability to integrate them or to arrest one or another of them in our perceptual attention that lends the unique depth and texture to the

theatre experience. Theatre is not simply an interesting fiction being performed; it is a *collaboration*, a set of mannerly assumptions about our being present at these other “two” things (this is why a rehearsal is not a performance). So there is no incompatibility among the modes: they co-exist continuously (at some level) on the same stage; one may “hear” them together or in succession, somewhat as one may choose to hear the oboe or the violin or the full orchestra. Perhaps some elaboration of the point is in order. Suppose a character speaks directly, collaboratively, to the audience (without, of course, stepping out of character): is the representational aspect of the moment diminished? Perhaps, but not necessarily. It is really a question of the *kind* of representation that has been established by the play (or by the production). One of the assumptions of “straight” realism, for example, is that there is no acknowledgement of the audience’s presence because the play is dead serious about being real, and it would hardly have served the interests of a play such as *Awake and Sing* if Morris Carnovsky had played some of his lines to an audience that was not supposed to be there. But a “violation” of this principle, properly prepared, is not incompatible with all forms of realism, as we see in Tom Wingfield’s “This play is memory” speech at the beginning of *The Glass Menagerie*. The Purpose of the collaborative principle here, of course, was to embed the “drama” in the wider frame of Tom’s reflective consciousness, no less realistic for being outside or beyond the action. In other words, when the collaborative mode is invoked for thematic purposes it is no more destructive to the stage illusion, even a highly realistic one, than iambic pentameter or song in opera. It is simply a means of adjusting the audience’s *illusory* nearness to the action.

As a way of widening the idea, let us look briefly at a symptomatic example from the theatre of Shakespeare. When Edmund collaboratively lets us in on his plan to undo his brother, we are still well within the illusory world of *King Lear* which includes (for certain characters at least) access to an imaginary listener. We are, in fact, only one short step beyond soliloquy, in which the character tends to speak as much *about* himself as *to* himself. Hence the illusory realness of Shakespeare’s theatre, which offers actors such wonderful opportunities to “show themselves off,” always contains a subtle collaborative element, or at least an option to address the audience. I suspect that the function of this option was not simply to allow the play to acknowledge its own fictionality but to keep one theatrical “eye” on the very palpable crowd ringing the stage. It is well to remember that realism, as we know it, is substantially a product of the indoor “evening” theatre, the ideal stage for treating the audience as an unsuspected voyeur rather than as an invited guest. But Shakespeare’s stage had a built-in “PR” problem in the sense that its audience, drawn from a relatively wide social base, was very visible, very near (if not on) the stage, and probably very vocal. Part of it loved Termagant and Herod and part of it must have loved Viola and Cordelia. I am not suggesting there was a discipline problem, only a diplomatic one – in fact, one of the oldest problems in communication: how to suit the manner of speaking to the manner in which the listener listens. For such a case, the rule of thumb might be: the more sociable the audience the more sociability must somehow be built into “the act.” No doubt this whole speaking relationship came about naturally and unproblematically (and could be attributed to many other influences); I am simply trying to illustrate how the collaborative element may be said to adjust the play to its social scene.

Given the emphasis on the subject matter in the representational mode, our problem becomes one of leaving the actor *per se* and looking more closely at how subjects get into the theatre and how they behave once they are there. Before doing so, however, it must be stressed that the representational mode of performance does not imply a “realistic” style of acting, singing, dancing, or production. Or, to put it accurately, what we call realism is no closer to reality than many forms of representation we would call stylized. It is hard to believe the anonymous biographer of Aeschylus when he says that the chorus of *The Eumenides* “so terrified the crowd that children died and women suffered miscarriage” (in Nagler 1952: 5). What we do learn from the reference, however, is the basic fact beneath all representation: the “suspension of disbelief” does not depend in the least on what we would today call a photographic likeness of the image to reality. It depends only on the power of the image to serve as a channel for what of reality is of immediate interest to the audience. In effect, this brings us to the study of conventions, and it might occupy an entire book. Here I want only to illustrate briefly how *the subject* of the representation “comes forth” and commands our interest. The fact is, most theatre, in Roland Barthes’ term, “prattles”; that is, it drifts on the current of fashion, content with predigested food, with “what the public wants.” This is not in any sense an indictment of theatre (the same could be said of any art), but an acknowledgement of one of its several responsibilities. But it is self-evident that any image – even a prattling one – has a life cycle we might characterize as a movement from innovation to convention to cliché, often with a final stage of self-parody. The new image explodes with life and ends up struggling for life, wearing out. Again, the simple fate of all art images is the curse of familiarity. “After we see an object several times,” Victor Shklovsky says, “we begin to recognize it. The object is in front of us and we know about it, but we do not see it” (1965: 13). Thus all images gravitate toward invisibility. To become accustomed to something means that one no longer sees it as “self-given.”

The innovative stage of an image is characterized by enthusiastic over-statement. The new image, like new fashions, “goes too far.” This is not a fault but a characteristic of enthusiasm and discovery, though, technically, it is observable as such only retrospectively, from the standpoint of later refinement. For example, in O’Neill’s early plays the discovery of “psychology” led to what we now perceive as embarrassing excesses in unrealistic devices (the long asides of *Strange Interlude*, over-explicit self-psychoanalysis) or to over-realism (the use of regional dialect and street slang, long drunk scenes). Many of these same enthusiasms had already become refined in continental realism, but images tend to be reborn *ad ovum* for new audiences. To take another image, virtually at its source, one can imagine how in the early 1890s London audiences who had just seen Ibsen’s daring *Hedda Gabler* or *A Doll’s House*, or had read Hardy’s scandalous *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, would have reacted to a “big scene” such as Paula Tanqueray’s exit from Pinero’s play. What probably interested the audience most is her closing speech, which is unfortunately too long to quote. But it may be summarized as a young wife’s prophetic vision of the day when age will have taken her beauty and she will be seen by her husband “under a queer, fantastic light at night or in the glare of the morning.” This is the last we hear from her, for, like Hedda and so many of her sisters in misery, she rushes off to her suicide. If the speech does not provide a motive (she has more immediate ones), it dramatizes graphically the “physical

revulsion” that might make suicide a reasonable option. For flavor, here is a sample of what is in store for her in a few short years:

A worn-out creature – broken up, very likely, some time before I ought to be – my hair bright, my eyes dull, my body too thin or too stout, my cheeks raddled and ruddled – a ghost, a wreck, a caricature, a candle that gutters, call such an end what you like!

She may even, she says earlier, “drift the way of the others” and resort to cosmetics “and those messes.” This speech is probably a good example of what Shaw meant by the word “Pinerotic” insofar as it seems to be more interested in caressing its subject than in getting Mrs Tanqueray into a suicidal mood. Hearing the speech today, an audience familiar, for example, with Blanche DuBois’ violent fear of the light bulb, would certainly be amused that a character so beside herself with anxiety would become such an eloquent raconteur of her own decay. But the image value of the speech in 1893 lies in the fact that it sounded a more or less unspoken concern that had not yet had its moment on the London stage. The lot of the ostracized woman had been a theme of realism since Dumas fils and Hebbel, but it was not until Ibsen and the new “sexual” novel that it took on such a private “psychological” complexion; and the important thing was to hold it up to the strong candlelight of the stage and turn it, ever so slowly (like those slow-motion blood baths in Peckinpah’s early films) until its anatomy was fully displayed. The common principle of innovative imagery from Seneca’s journeys through Hell to realism’s journeys into the causal past to Absurdity’s absurdities seems to be that if something is good, more of it is better. Little is left to the imagination because the eye and the ear have not yet had their fill.

The innovative obviously gives way quickly to the conventional phase of the image. Conventions, Harry Levin has said, “are seldom recognized until they have been nearly outgrown” (1950: 66). Another way to say this is that function disguises form: when content is interesting you are apt not to notice the container (for example, only when an actor becomes boring do you notice that he has habits). The conventional phase of an image is what we might term the semiotically strong phase. By semiotically strong I am referring to the inrush of memory on perception that allows the new image to begin its work of linking the stage to the world of meaning outside. As an image becomes phenomenally weaker it becomes (for a time) significantly stronger – which is to say that it no longer stands in its own way.

The semiotically vital stage of an image is marked by a drive that might be characterized in two ways. On one hand, the image strives to become more efficient or streamlined: this is one way in which it guards itself against the audience’s growing familiarity. An image’s relation to its audience, if we can speak in such terms, is like the conversation of married people: it needs to say less and less in order to communicate. But on the other hand, it faces the task of escaping its own streamlined stereotype. Hence its migration to new contents. This is the stage in which it “names” all of the things in society it can express: first adultery in the city, then adultery on the farm, then aboard ship, and so on. Once the theatre is armed with a paradigm, it will not be satisfied until it has tried out every available content. Ideally, the progress will be from surprise to surprise; that is, the next variation should contain an unexpected numerator that will display the denominator (adultery) in fresh accents.

There is no way to be more specific about the evolution of the image because images vary in their resistance or submissiveness to conventionalization, in their potential for combination and permutation, and in their durability. It is only a matter of the time it takes an image to fill up with emptiness. An image might have its season in the sun and die of old age (Charlotte Cushman and Sarah Bernhardt playing Hamlet), only to be resurrected in another age (Judith Anderson playing Hamlet). Or it may achieve “immortality,” or such immortality as history permits. For example, in 1830 the actor playing Hugo’s *Hernani* stood downstage with his back to the audience through most of the opening act. It does not matter whether this was the first instance of “the theatre of the back,” though it does matter that the scene is France – in England it would have been less memorable because, as Voltaire once put it, an Englishman says what he will, a Frenchman what he can. In one gesture this production of *Hernani* articulated the root principle of naturalism long before its time. Implicit in “the back” is the whole concept of the “fourth-wall convention” and all the uses and abuses of the idea that the stage is a replica of the real world and not a palace of virtuosity from which the real world was kept at bay by firm rules, among them the rule that the actor played to his audience at all times. “The back,” however, was apparently slow to catch on and only began to flourish in the later century with the Naturalists and Antoine. In other words, it needed the kind of play that would justify it. In fact, by the turn of the century it had passed from the status of a convention to that of an annoyance, a little like swearing in the plays of the 1960s. But the back obviously survived because it was not so much an image as a *way of being* on the stage. Today, we no longer perceive it as a convention but as normal stage posture. It is natural, not naturalistic. Today’s naturalistic parallel might be frontal nudity – which began, we might recall, as a “back” view – now well on its way into the conventional stage and, barring a moral revolution, destined for permanent service.

It would perhaps be more convenient to talk in broad terms of image systems, or subjects, rather than in terms of individual images, since all images in the theatre occur in an “informational polyphony” (Barthes 1972: 261), or a dense context in which they interact and give life to each other. As a typical model we might take the evolution of villainy in English drama of the Shakespeare period. Everyone will recognize the phrase “Be ruled by me,” which occurs regularly, especially in those scenes in which villains are meeting “in hugger-mugger” and one of them must be persuaded to dirty business by the other. But one notices that the reasons *why* someone should be ruled by someone else become more telegraphic as we progress through the period. That is, the phrase becomes a substitute, or shorthand, for any or all of the standard motives the audience knows from past plays (in somewhat the same way that the sign “Keep off the grass” is shorthand for a set of known motives pertaining to the sociology of landscaping). But this short-cutting in the display of persuasion is only a symptom of a gradual shift in the sensational emphasis of on-stage violence itself. If I may amend a proposition from Kenneth Burke: the growing fascination with the forms of violence leads to a corresponding atrophy in the motivational psychology behind violence.³ On the whole, Elizabethan drama was very casual about motivating anything, but the spectacle of arousing and plotting revenge (or motivation) is much more central in early drama. For example, Hieronimo is plunged into grief by the murder of his son, is driven mad by grief, and kills sensationally in his madness late in the play. And so with

Hamlet. Whereas, in later plays (for example Webster) motives are murky and it is usually sufficient to hate someone to have him dispatched. In sum, long simmering revenges such as Hamlet's or Othello's fell out of fashion, and attention shifted to the interesting things one could do to victims once revenge was set in motion. Now Elizabethan drama, from start to finish, is probably the bloodiest in theatre history. It is hard to top early plays such as *The Jew of Malta*, *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, *Selimus*, and *Titus Andronicus* for pure gore: but these plays are naive when compared to some of the death scenes of Tourneur, Webster, and Massinger. Here the theatrical shock falls not only on the number of deaths or on the brutality but on the ingenuity of the murderers, whose devices remind you of Rube Goldberg machines in their intricacy. In fact, some characters seem to have been admitted to the play only for the spectacle of their departure through someone's "witty cruelty," as one of Massinger's characters puts it. Massinger's best contribution to this spectacle is a play in which a Roman actor (who has been doomed by Caesar) is mercifully allowed to die "on the job" while acting out a death scene with Caesar.

The cliché stage of the image speaks for itself. The vein has, temporarily at least, run dry. The spectator sees not only through the signifier but also through the signified. For example, the benevolent characters of eighteenth-century sentimental drama eventually cease to remind one of benevolence or anything else; they are simply ciphers in a boring formula that no longer accounts for life satisfactorily. Hence Goldsmith's cry – *enough* of the virtues and distresses of private life! The more interesting stage is that of self-parody where the drama pokes fun at its own ossifications. Let us imagine a moment in history in which by some Borgesian fluke the theatre becomes enamored of plays with ticking clocks, running fountains, and child actors with pet dogs. This is, so to speak, the winning combination, and no play is really safe unless it contains at least one or two of these attractions. But in time this winning combination becomes a standard "formula" and things reach a crisis. Audiences begin seeing through everything: they see only the signs of a weary stage. The crisis might temporarily arrest itself in self-parody which injects into the formula the in-joke of its own immanent suicide. This is a highly collaborative moment in which stage and audience share an understanding about plays *as* plays. It is probably very brief and the *coup de grace* may occur (homage to Chekhov) when an adult character in a new and innovative play enters and says to another adult character, "Let's sit down here and talk. Thank god there are no dogs or children about." And the audience cheers. This seems far-fetched until one remembers that this is how Euripides "finished off" poor Aeschylus in the recognition scene of his *Electra* and, more generally, the "matter of Troy" itself in plays such as *Helen* and *Orestes*.

To sum up: we should think of these pronominal modes as points of reference rather than as discrete phases in our perception of the actor. In other words, having separated them out we should probably allow them to fall back together into a perceptual synthesis, bearing in mind that even when they "upstage" each other they are as much cooperating as competing. The advantage of thinking about the actor in such terms is not that we learn anything new about him but that we have a better basis for seeing how his performance awakens our interest, not only as individuals "sitting at a play" but as members of a social species that "commissions" the actor to enact plays about our various concerns and addictions. There is probably no such thing as a "period" in which one mode dominates the others, though certainly in the era of the star system the actor's virtuosity – or at least his

reputation for virtuosity – drew the audience to one kind of theatre more so than the subject of the play. And in the 1960s something in our culture gave rise to a rash of collaborative plays, or what we might call a return to Rousseau naturalism in which the actor strived, with our consent, to make theatre once again an enterprise that included the audience. Finally, we might point to moments in theatre history when the play itself became the instrument through which we examined emerging veins of social behavior or revived old veins: the new social drama of the late nineteenth century, the American Agit-prop theatre, the various revivals of romantic and poetic drama, “realistic” plays about drug addiction, homosexuality, deranged children, and so on. But even such emphatic moments do not circumscribe theatre’s various appeals at any particular time. And so it is with the appeal of the actor, who is probably as complex a phenomenon as the theatre he serves. The problem with the actor, in fact, is that he is *there*, before us, *all at once*, doing artificially what the rest of us do naturally – in one sense the primary medium of theatre, in another its end and purpose. My intention here is not to offer a complete phenomenology of his art but to treat it as an act of speech – a discourse, one might say, on *our* behavior – that can be broken down into the pronominal triad that is the basis of all speech. The actor acts out our way of referring to the things of the world. Or, translated into the terms of our perception of his art: he does this by becoming, in part, a thing himself, in part by doing a thing, and in part by sharing it – that is, allowing us briefly to live another life, peculiarly inserted into our own, which produces an entelechial completion, dimly like the effect of an out-of-body experience.

4

ON ACTING AND NOT-ACTING

Michael Kirby

To act means to feign, to simulate, to represent, to impersonate. As Happenings demonstrated, not all performing is acting. Although acting was sometimes used, the performers in Happenings generally tended to “be” nobody or nothing other than themselves; nor did they represent, or pretend to be in, a time or place different from that of the spectator. They walked, ran, said words, sang, washed dishes, swept, operated machines and stage devices, and so forth, but they did not feign or impersonate.

In most cases, acting and not-acting are relatively easy to recognize and identify. In a performance, we usually know when a person is acting and when not. But there is a scale or continuum of behavior involved, and the differences between acting and not-acting may be small. In such cases categorization may not be easy. Perhaps some would say it is unimportant, but, in fact, it is precisely these borderline cases that can provide insights into acting theory and the nature of the art.

Let us examine acting by tracing the acting/not-acting continuum from one extreme to the other. We will begin at the not-acting end of the scale, where the performer does nothing to feign, simulate, impersonate, and so forth, and move to the opposite position, where behavior of the type that defines acting appears in abundance. Of course, when we speak of “acting” we are referring not to any one style but to all styles. We are not concerned, for example, with the degree of “reality” but with what we can call, for now, the amount of acting.

NOT-ACTING

ACTING

There are numerous performances that do not use acting. Many, but by no means all, dance pieces would fit into this category. Several Far Eastern theatres make use of stage attendants such as the *Kurombo* and *koken* of *kabuki*. These attendants move props into position and remove them, help with on-stage costume changes, and even serve tea to the actors. Their dress distinguishes them from the actors, and they are not included in the informational structure of the narrative. Even if the

spectator ignores them as people, however, they are not invisible. They do not act, and yet they are part of the visual presentation.

As we will see when we get to that point on the continuum, “acting” is active – it refers to feigning, simulation, and so forth that is done by a performer. But representation, simulation, and other qualities that define acting may also be applied to the performer. The way in which a costume creates a “character” is one example.

Let us forsake performance for a moment and consider how the “costume continuum” functions in daily life. If a man wears cowboy boots on the street, as many people do, we do not identify him as a cowboy. If he also wears a wide, tooled-leather belt and even a western hat, we do not see this as a costume, even in a northern city. It is merely a choice of clothing. As more and more items of western clothing – a bandana, chaps, spurs, and so forth – are added, however, we reach the point at which we see either a cowboy or a person dressed as (impersonating) a cowboy. The exact point on the continuum at which this specific identification occurs depends on several factors, the most important of which is place or physical context, and it undoubtedly varies from person to person.

The effect of clothing on stage functions in exactly the same way, but it is more pronounced. A performer wearing only black leotards and western boots might easily be identified as a cowboy. This, of course, indicates the symbolic power of costume in performance. It is important, however, to notice the degree to which the external symbolization is supported and reinforced (or contradicted) by the performer’s behavior. If the performer moves (acts) like a cowboy, the identification is made much more readily. If he is merely himself, the identification might not be made at all.

At this stage on our acting/not-acting continuum we are concerned with those performers who do not do anything to reinforce the information or identification. When the performers, like the stage attendants of *kabuki* and *no*, are merely conveyed by their costumes themselves and not embedded, as it were, in matrices of pretended or represented character, situation, place, and time, they can be referred to as being “nonmatrixed.” As we move toward acting from this extreme not-acting position on the continuum, we come to that condition in which the performer does not act and yet his or her costume represents something or someone. We could call this state a “symbolized matrix.”

NOT-ACTING

Nonmatrixed
Performing

Symbolized Matrix

ACTING

In *Oedipus, a New Work*, by John Perreault, the “main performer,” as Perreault refers to him rather than calling him an actor, limps. If we are aware of the title of the piece and of the story of Oedipus, we might assume that this performer represents Oedipus. He does not pretend to limp, however. A stick has been tied “to his right leg underneath his pants in such a way that he will be forced to limp.” When the “main performer” operates a tape recorder, as he does frequently during the presentation, we do not think that this is a representation of Oedipus running a machine. It is a nonmatrixed performer doing something. The lighting of incense and the casting of a reading from the *I Ching* can be seen as a reference to the

Delphic Oracle; the three lines of tape that the “main performer” places on the floor so that they converge in the center of the area can be seen as representing the place where, at the intersection of three roads, Oedipus killed his father, and the limp (and the sunglasses that the “main performer” wears throughout the piece) can be considered to stand for aspects of Oedipus. The performer, however, never behaves as if he were anyone other than himself. He never represents elements of character. He merely carries out certain actions.

In a symbolized matrix the referential elements are applied to but not acted by the performer. And just as western boots do not necessarily establish a cowboy, a limp may convey information without establishing a performer as Oedipus. When, as in *Oedipus, a New Work*, the character and place matrices are weak, intermittent, or nonexistent, we see a person, not an actor. As “received” references increase, however, it is difficult to say that the performer is not acting even though he or she is doing nothing that could be defined as acting. In a New York luncheonette before Christmas we might see “a man in a Santa Claus suit” drinking coffee; if exactly the same action were carried out on stage in a setting representing a rustic interior, we might see “Santa Claus drinking coffee in his home at the North Pole.” When the matrices are strong, persistent, and reinforce each other, we see an actor, no matter how ordinary the behavior. This condition, the next step closer to true acting on our continuum, we may refer to as “received acting.”

NOT-ACTING		ACTING	
Nonmatrixed Performing	Symbolized Matrix	Received Acting	

Extras, who do nothing but walk and stand in costume, are seen as “actors.” Anyone merely walking across a stage containing a realistic setting might come to represent a person in that place – and, perhaps, time – without doing anything we could distinguish as acting. There is the anecdote of the critic who headed backstage to congratulate a friend and could be seen by the audience as he passed outside the windows of the on-stage house; it was an opportune moment in the story, however, and he was accepted as part of the play.

Nor does the behavior in received acting necessarily need to be simple. Let us imagine a setting representing a bar. In one of the upstage booths, several men play cards throughout the act. Let us say that none of them has lines in the play; they do not react in any way to the characters in the story we are observing. These men do not act. They merely play cards. They may really win and lose money gambling. And yet we also see them as characters, however minor, in the story, and we say that they, too, are acting. We do not distinguish them from the other actors.

If we define acting as something that is done by, rather than something that is done for or to, a performer, we have not yet arrived at true acting on our scale. “Received actor” is only an honorary title. Although the performer seems to be acting, he or she actually is not. Nonmatrixed performing, symbolized matrix, and received acting are stages on the continuum from not-acting to acting. The amount of simulation, representation, impersonation, and so forth has increased as we have moved along the scale, but, so far, none of this was created by the performer in a special way we could designate as “acting.”

Although acting in its most complete form offers no problem of definition, our task in constructing a continuum is to designate those transitional areas in which acting begins. What are the simplest characteristics that define acting?

NOT-ACTING		ACTING	
Nonmatrixed Performing	Symbolized Matrix	Received Acting	Simple Acting

They may be either physical or emotional. If the performer does something to simulate, represent, impersonate, and so forth, he or she is acting. It does not matter what style is used or whether the action is part of a complete characterization or informational presentation. No emotion needs to be involved. The definition can depend solely on the character of what is done. (Value judgments, of course, are not involved. Acting is acting whether or not it is done “well” or accurately.) Thus a person who, as in the game of charades, pretends to put on a jacket that does not exist or feigns being ill is acting. Acting can be said to exist in the smallest and simplest action that involves pretense.

Acting also exists in emotional rather than strictly physical terms. Let us say, for example, that we are at a presentation by the Living Theatre of *Paradise Now*. It is that well-known section in which the performers, working individually, walk through the auditorium speaking directly to the spectators. “I’m not allowed to travel without a passport,” they say. “I’m not allowed to smoke marijuana!” “I’m not allowed to take my clothes off!” They seem sincere, disturbed, and angry. Are they acting?

The performers are themselves; they are not portraying characters. They are in the theatre, not in some imaginary or represented place. What they say is certainly true. They are not allowed to travel – at least between certain countries – without a passport; the possession of marijuana is against the law. Probably we will all grant that the performers really believe what they are saying – that they really feel these rules and regulations are unjust. Yet they are acting. Acting exists only in their emotional presentation.

At times in real life we meet people who we feel are acting. This does not mean that they are lying, dishonest, living in an unreal world, or necessarily giving a false impression of their character and personality. It means that they seem to be aware of an audience – to be “on stage” – and that they react to this situation by energetically projecting ideas, emotions, and elements of their personality, underlining and theatricalizing it for the sake of the audience. That is what the performers in *Paradise Now* were doing. They were acting their own emotions and beliefs.

Let us phrase this problem in a slightly different way. Public speaking, whether it is extemporaneous or makes use of a script, may involve emotion, but it does not necessarily involve acting. Yet some speakers, while retaining their own characters and remaining sincere, seem to be acting. At what point does acting appear? At the point at which the emotions are “pushed” for the sake of the spectators. This does not mean that the speakers are false or do not believe what they are saying. It merely means that they are selecting and projecting an element of character-emotion – to the audience.

In other words, it does not matter whether an emotion is created to fit an acting situation or whether it is simply amplified. One principle of “method” acting – at least as it is taught in this country – is the use of whatever real feelings and emotions the actor has while playing the role. (Indeed, this became a joke; no matter what unusual or uncomfortable physical urges or psychological needs or problems the actor had, he or she was advised to “use” them.) It may be merely the use and projection of emotion that distinguishes acting from not-acting.

This is an important point. It indicates that acting involves a basic psychic or emotional component; although this component exists in all forms of acting to some degree (except, of course, received acting), it, in itself, is enough to distinguish acting from not-acting. Since this element of acting is mental, a performer may act without moving. This does not mean that, as has been mentioned previously, the motionless person “acts” in a passive and “received” way by having a character, a relationship, a place, and so on imposed on him by the information provided in the presentation. The motionless performer may convey certain attitudes and emotions that are acting even though no physical action is involved.

Further examples of rudimentary acting – as well as examples of not-acting – may be seen in the well-known “mirror” exercise in which two people stand facing each other while one copies or “reflects,” like a mirror, the movements of the other. Although this is an exercise used in training actors, acting itself is not necessarily involved. The movements of the first person, and therefore those of the second, might not represent or pretend. Each might merely raise and lower the arms or turn their head. The movements could be completely abstract.

It is here, however, that the perceived relationship between the performer and what is being created can be seen to be crucial in the definition of acting. Even “abstract” movements may be personified and made into a character of sorts through the performer’s attitude. If the actor seems to indicate “I am this thing” rather than merely “I am doing these movements,” we accept him or her as the “thing”: the performer is acting. But we do not accept the “mirror” as acting, even though that character is a “representation” of the first person. He lacks the psychic energy that would turn the abstraction into a personification. If an attitude of “I’m imitating you” is projected, however – if purposeful distortion or “editorializing” appears rather than the neutral attitude of exact copying – the mirror becomes an actor even though the original movements were abstract.

The same exercise may easily involve acting in a more obvious way. The first person, for example, may pretend to shave. The mirror, in copying these feigned actions, becomes an actor now in spite of taking a neutral attitude. (We could call the mirror a “received actor” because, like character and place in our earlier examples, the representation has been “put upon” that person without the inner creative attitude and energy necessary for true acting. The mirror’s acting, like that of a marionette, is controlled from the outside.) If the originator in the mirror exercise put on a jacket, he or she would not necessarily be acting; if the originator or the mirror, not having a jacket, pretended to put one on, it would be acting, and so on.

As we have moved along the continuum from not-acting to acting, the amount of representation, personification, and so forth has increased. Now that we have arrived at true acting, we might say that it, too, varies in amount. Small amounts of acting – like those in the examples that have been given – would occupy that part

of the scale closest to received acting, and we could move along the continuum to a hypothetical maximum amount of acting. Indeed, the only alternative would seem to be an on-off or all-or-nothing view in which all acting is theoretically (if not qualitatively) equal and undifferentiated.

“Amount” is a difficult word to use in this case, however. Since, especially for Americans, it is easy to assume that more is better, any reference to amount might be taken to indicate relative value or worth. It would be better to speak of “simple” and “complex” acting with the hope that these terms can be accepted as objective and descriptive rather than evaluative. After all, “simple” and “complex” are terms that may be ascribed easily and without implied value judgment to other performance arts such as music and dance. A ballad is relatively simple compared to a symphony; the ordinary foxtrot is much less complex than the filmed dances of Fred Astaire. Let us apply the same analysis to acting, remembering that simple acting, such as in the mirror exercise, may be very good, whereas complex acting is not necessarily good and may, indeed, be quite bad.

Complex acting, then, would be the final condition on our acting/not-acting continuum. What do we mean by complex acting? In what ways can acting be simple or complex?

NOT-ACTING				ACTING
Nonmatrixed	Symbolized	Received	Simple	Complex
Performing	Matrix	Acting	Acting	Acting

The simplest acting is that in which only one element or dimension of acting is used. Emotion, as we have seen, may be the only area in which pretense takes place. Or, as in the mirror exercise, only an action such as putting on a jacket may be simulated. Other acting exercises attempt to isolate various aspects of acting, and they are proof that behavior, which is complex, can be broken down into simple units.

The simple/complex scale also applies to each individual aspect of acting. Emotion may be generalized and unchanging, or it may be specific, modulating and changing frequently within a given period of time. Inexperienced actors, for example, often “play an attitude,” “telling” or indicating the single emotion the spectator should have toward the scene or the character rather than the changing feelings of the character. An action may be performed in a simple or a complex way. In the game of charades, for example, we may only indicate that we are putting on a jacket. As long as our team understands what we are doing, the acting is successful. The same action becomes more complex as details such as the resistance of the material, the degree of fit, the weight of the jacket, and so on are acted.

(The word “indicate” that was just used in connection with charades has negative connotations in the technical vocabulary of American method acting. Practitioners of the method cannot accept an element of acting that exists in relative isolation and is not totally integrated by being “justified” and related to other elements. In other styles, however, isolated acting elements are perfectly acceptable and are used, among other things, to focus attention.)

Acting becomes complex as more and more elements are incorporated into the pretense. Let us say that the performer putting on a jacket is part of a scene: the

performer may choose to act emotion (fear, let us say), physical characteristics (the person portrayed is old), place (there is a bright sun), and many other elements. Each of these could be performed in isolation, but when they are presented simultaneously or in close proximity to each other the acting becomes complex. In like manner, it is obvious that when speech is added to mime the resultant acting is more complex than the mime alone; the acting involved in a staged reading will, in all likelihood, be less complex than the acting in a fully staged production of the same script; and so forth.

In part, complexity is related to skill and technical ability. Some styles make use of a highly specialized, complex vocabulary. This does not contradict my earlier statement that the acting/not-acting continuum is independent of value judgments. It is not a question of whether a performer can do certain complex acting well but whether he or she can do it at all. Anyone can act; not everyone can act in a complex way.

Yet the analysis of acting according to simple/complex does not necessarily distinguish one style from another, although it could be used to compare styles of acting. Each style has a certain range when measured on a simple/complex scale, and in almost all performances the degree of complexity varies somewhat from moment to moment. It would be impossible to say, for example, that the realistic style of acting is necessarily more complex than the "Grotowski style" of expressionism. Realism, in its most complete and detailed form, would certainly be considered relatively complex. Yet there are many approaches to realism; some – such as those used in many films – ask very little of the actor and would be considered relatively simple. The film actor may do very little; the camera and the physical/informational context do the "acting." A nonrealistic style such as that developed by Jerzy Grotowski, however, can also be extremely complex. In *The Constant Prince*, the acting was very complex. The impression was not one of overacting but of many things taking place simultaneously in the work of a single actor. Frequently, actors will do nothing when another actor is speaking; they will act less so as to help focus the speaker. In Grotowski's staging, this did not happen. During the Prince's long monologues, the other performers did not decrease the complexity of their acting; their bodies were frequently involved in numerous, detailed, small-scale movements. In part, at least, this complexity may be explained by Grotowski's exercises that are designed to develop the ability of the actor to express different, and even contradictory, things with different parts of his body at the same time. Some companies, however, that use what may be recognized as Grotowski style act very simply.

Thus we have arrived at a scale that measures the amount or degree of representation, simulation, impersonation, and so forth in performance behavior. Although the polar states are acting and not-acting, we can follow a continuous increase in the degree of representation from nonmatrixed performing through symbolized matrix, received acting, and simple acting to complex acting.

Belief may exist in either the spectator or the performer, but it does not affect objective classification according to our acting/not-acting scale. Whether an actor feels what he or she is doing to be "real," or a spectator really "believes" what is seen, does not change the classification of the performance; it merely suggests another area or parameter.

Various types and styles of acting are, indeed, seen as more or less realistic, but, except as an indication of style, the word “reality” has little usefulness when applied to acting. From one point of view, all acting is, by definition, “unreal” because pretense, impersonation, and so forth are involved. From another point of view, all acting is real. Philosophically, a *no* play is as real (if not as realistic) as a Chekhov production. Pretense and impersonation, even in those rare cases when they are not recognized as such, are as real as anything else.

Most plays, of course, even the most naturalistic ones, do not attempt to fool the observer into thinking that they are “real” – that they do not involve acting. Illusionary stagecraft and realistic acting do not intend or expect to be taken for real life any more than an illusionistic painting is intended to be mistaken for what it represents. In almost all performances, we see the “real” person and also that which the actor is representing or pretending. The actor is visible within the character.

To say that no performance can deceive a spectator would not be true, however. True and complete illusion is possible in theatre; acting may actually “lie,” be believed, and be seen as not being acting at all. This happened in Norman Taffel’s *Little Trips*.

Little Trips began with an enactment by two performers of the story of Cassandra, who was captured by the Greeks when Troy fell. After acting out several incidents – the entry of the Trojan Horse, the rape of Cassandra, among others – the spectators, who were standing around the performing area, were asked to join the actors, if they wished, and to play the same incidents, which would be repeated. At some point in the first or second repetition, while some spectators watched and others participated, the play began to break down. Perhaps one of the spectators protested against spitting in “Cassandra’s” mouth, for this was one of the carefully selected images. Perhaps the performers began to argue, and the spectators took sides. At each performance, there was an argument; the play, as it had been described to the spectators in a preliminary introduction, never ended. But this is the way the presentation had been planned. By talking to and exploiting the feelings of the participating spectators, with whom they were able to talk more or less informally, the actors were often able to make them, unknowingly, part of the planned breakdown of the performance. The entire performance was designed to move from the context of art to that of life. Many people actually believed it; indeed, some never discovered that what they thought was a real argument that destroyed the performance had actually been acted.

(During *Little Trips* the two performers changed from a rather simple form of acting that could be more or less copied by participating members of the audience to a conversational style, the realism of which was, perhaps, heightened by the contrast. In terms of our previous discussion of acting, however, it is important to note that the effect of reality did not depend entirely on the acting. It is not only the behavior of the performers but the total performance experience that determines the spectator’s response. What creates an illusion in one context will not necessarily do so in another, and in other frames of reference the same acting would have remained “acting.”)

There is another type of performance in which the spectator does not recognize the acting for what it really is. An Argentine architect told of her experiences at an all-night religious ceremony on the northern coast of Brazil. At one point, costumed performers appeared who were thought to be dead ancestors. This caused

panic among the believers because the doors were locked, and they thought if these ghost-beings touched them they, too, would die. Although belief of this kind obviously affects the quality of the experience, it does not mean that pretense, impersonation, and so forth were not involved in the performance. The appearance of the “dead” ancestors was acted. They knew they were still alive.

Even if the performers believed themselves to be dead, acting would have been involved. Belief would not change the objective fact that something or someone was being represented. This is not to say that belief cannot be an important aspect of acting in certain styles. A principle of the method that achieved the stature of a cliché was the attempt by the actors to believe what the character was doing. If they were successful, the audience would really believe, too. There is no question that this approach has frequently been successful. The attempt to believe undoubtedly attains or approaches with some certainty and predictability the goals that are sought, and it well may be the best approach to these particular problems. At the same time, it is just as clear that belief is not an acceptable criterion for an actor. Many times the actor, when faced with a certain lack of “belief” by the audience, protests that he or she really believed. The important point, however, is that when belief is present or is attained by a performer, acting itself does not disappear. The acting/not-acting scale measures pretense, impersonation, feigning, and so forth; it is independent of either the spectator’s or the performer’s belief.

Nor can sincerity or commitment be used to define acting. There is the story of the incredibly successful young actor who returns from Hollywood for a visit to his home town. “How do you do it?” his friends ask. “What’s the secret?” “There’s only one thing you need,” the actor answers. “Sincerity.” He pauses. “Once you learn how to fake that, you’ve got it made.” As the story indicates, sincerity, too, may be acted. Indeed, the behavior of a person who pretends to be sincere and committed – or underlines theatrically these personality aspects in public presentation – may be seen as another example of simple acting. The story also implies that many people use the appearance of sincerity and commitment as a standard of evaluation. This remains a subjective judgment, however. There is no objective way to measure sincerity and commitment. Nor are these characteristics limited to actors and acting. Everyone – painters, writers, even doctors and teachers – may be sincere about their activities and committed to them. A nonmatrixed performer may be just as committed as someone involved in complex acting.

During the last ten or twelve years, theatre in the United States has undergone a more complete and radical change than in any other equivalent period in its history. At least this is true of the theatre considered as an art rather than as a craft, business or entertainment. Since, in the past, almost all of American theatre has been craft, business or entertainment, this may not be a very startling fact, but the changes have been striking and extensive. Every aspect of performance has been affected, including acting. In 1964, the *Drama Review* devoted two complete issues to Stanislavsky; now the “method” no longer has the absolute dominance it once did in this country, and certain alternative approaches are attracting great interest. Everyone now seems to realize that “acting” does not mean just one thing – the attempt to imitate life in a realistic and detailed fashion.

Thus eclecticism or diversity in the approaches to acting is one aspect of the recent change in American theatre. In terms of our theoretical acting/not-acting continuum, however, we can be more specific: there has, within the last ten years,

been a shift toward the not-acting end of the scale. This means not only that more nonmatrixed performing has been used but also that, in a number of ways, acting has grown less complex. A brief review of recent developments will allow us to examine how this has come about while also providing additional examples of the various areas on the acting/not-acting scale.

The most important single factor in the recent changes in performance has been the so-called “Happening.” Happenings, of course, are now a part of history. The term is best used in a historical and sociological way to refer to those works created as part of the international Happenings movement of the early and mid-1960s. (The first piece called a Happening was done in 1959, but other generically similar works preceded it, and the term is important only as a reference and as a popular catch-phrase.) The necessary point, however, is that works that, on completely formal grounds, could be called Happenings continue to be done and that almost all of the many innovations produced by Happenings have been applied to narrative, informational, acted theatre. Although I have no wish to perpetuate the name, those who think that Happenings were unimportant, or that the theatre form characterized by Happenings is no longer alive merely because the word is no longer used, do not understand the nature of the form. At any rate, the Happening can help to explain much about current developments in acting.

Under the direct influence of Happenings, among other things, every aspect of theatre in this country has changed: scripts have lost their importance and performances are created collectively; the physical relationship of audience and performance has been altered in many different ways and has been made an inherent part of the piece; audience participation has been investigated; “found” spaces rather than theatres have been used for performance and several different places employed sequentially for the same performance; there has been an increased emphasis on movement and on visual imagery (not to mention a commercialized use of nudity); and so forth. It would be difficult to find any avant-garde performance in this country [USA] that did not show the influence of Happenings in one way or another. But Happenings made little use of acting. How, then, could they have anything to do with the recent changes in acting? One way to see their influence is to examine the historical relationship between Happenings and the more prominent United States theatre groups. The history is not very old, but apparent fads are forgotten very quickly.

The last play that the Living Theatre produced before going into its self-imposed exile in Europe was *The Brig*. It was a realistic play with supposed documentary aspects, and it emphasized the “fourth wall” – a high wire-mesh fence closed off the proscenium opening, separating the spectators and the performers. When the Living opened its next production in Paris in October 1964, the style and form, if not the sociopolitical nature of the content, had changed completely. *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces* was a Happening. (The group would later do another piece, *Paradise Now*, that could also have been called a Happening.)

Of course, *Mysteries* was not called a “Happening” by the Living Theatre, and few, especially in Europe, recognized it as such. (Claes Oldenburg, who was the first one I knew to see it, identified it, but this might be expected. He had seen quite a few Happenings.) At any rate, the performance was without plot, story or narrative. It was divided into sequential scenes or compartments – one emphasized movement, another sound, another the smell of incense and so forth. Some even

involved acting. The performance was apparently put together on rather short notice and was the work of the group rather than any one writer. (Almost all of the major Happenings were the product of one artist's imagination, but Happenings often were created by a group, each of whom contributed his specialty – music, design, poetry and so forth – and, among other things, the form gained the reputation of being group creations, thus inspiring those who were dissatisfied with working from an author's previously written script.) Certain images in *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces* came from *The Brig*, but much of it was taken from outside the group and was identical or similar to various Event and Happening images.

In one of the later sections of *Mysteries*, all of the members of the cast died. That is, they pretended to die. Death can be symbolized, but they chose to act it. No acting of this sort was taking place in the Happenings; the Living chose to use elements of acting within the Happening structure. But the acting did not involve character, place or situation – other than, perhaps, the conditions of the Artaudian plague that was the cause of death. The actors were only themselves “dying” in the aisles and on the stage of the theatre.

This simplification of acting is typical of much of the work in the new theatre. Indeed, the movement toward the nonmatrixed or “reality” end of our acting/not-acting continuum made some wonder when death itself would become real rather than “merely” acted in performance. In Happening-like presentations, Ralph Ortiz – and others before him – had decapitated live chickens. Peter Brook included the burning of a butterfly in *US*. (Live butterflies were seen flying out of a box, but there is some doubt whether the burned butterfly was indeed real. Cutting the head off a chicken makes death obvious; a butterfly can be “faked.” “We cannot tell,” reads the script of *US*, “if it is real or false.”)

One of the scenes in *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces* was a sound-and-movement exercise taken from the Open Theatre. Two lines of performers face each other. A performer from one line moves toward the other line making a particular sound-and-movement combination. A person from the second line “takes” the movement and sound, changing them before passing them on to someone in the first line, and so forth. Like the mirror exercise that was discussed earlier, this use of an acting exercise as an actual performance is one way to simplify acting by concentrating on one or a limited number of elements. Exercises, often more integrated into the action than was this example, were frequently used in the new theatre for their performance qualities and expressiveness rather than for their training values.

This was probably the same exercise that opened the first public performance of the Open Theatre. These presentations, which began in December 1963 and continued into 1965, combined various exercises and short plays on the same bill. It would be foolish to claim a kinship with Happenings for these “variety” programs, but one wonders whether the similarity between the exercises and certain “game” and task-oriented work by, among others, the Judson Dance Theatre did not suggest the possibility of presenting the exercises, which were designed to be done privately, to the public.

Yet another company that showed exercises and made them part of a longer piece is the Performance Group. In its first public presentation, on a 1968 benefit program with other groups, it performed an “Opening Ceremony” composed of exercises adapted from Jerzy Grotowski with certain vocal additions. This “Ceremony” was in *Dionysus in 69* when it opened.

The effect of Happenings on Richard Schechner's work predated the Performance Group, however. The New Orleans Group, which he organized in late 1965, produced a large and spectacular Happening in 1966 and then adapted the various technical means and the audience/performance relationship of the Happening to an "environmental" production of Eugene Ionesco's *Victims of Duty* in 1967. The use of real names, personal anecdotal material, and so forth in *Dionysus in 69* can be seen as an attempt to move away from complex acting toward the nonmatrixed performing of Happenings.

Happenings somehow gained the reputation for exhibitionism; some certainly had "camp" aspects. It was probably their use of the untrained performer – the "found" person/actor – that had the most influence on the Theatre of the Ridiculous. John Vacarro, who performed in at least one of Robert Whitman's Happenings, has explained how important the experience was to him. The unabashedly home-made quality of many Happenings was also an inspiration to many people who did not have an inclination toward slickness, craft, and technique.

This is not to suggest that the general movement toward simplification of acting resulted entirely from the direct influence of Happenings. There have been many factors, all interdependent to some extent: Viola Spolin's improvisations; Grotowski's emphasis on confrontation, disarming, and the *via negativa*; an interest in developing ensembles; the early desire of the Open Theatre to find techniques that were applicable to the Theatre of the Absurd.

Yet influence can also be indirect. Happenings have contributed their share to the creation of a state of mind that values the concrete as opposed to the pretended or simulated and that does not require plots or stories. The most original playwright of recent years, Peter Handke, has worked in this area. Although his plays are quite different from most of the new theatre in this country [USA], many of them illustrate the same concern with simplification of acting.

Offending the Audience and *Self-Accusation* by Handke are unusual plays, if they can be called plays at all. Handke refers to them as "speak-ins" (*Sprechstucke*). They do not employ any matrices of place or character. They take place on plain, bare stages; the actors do not relate to or refer to imaginary locales. The performers are themselves; they are not dressed in any unusual way, nor do they portray characters. In fact, Handke has written dialogue for performers who do not necessarily have to act. The scripts require no pretense or emotion.

The performers speak. They have memorized what Handke has written, and they have rehearsed. But this does not, in itself, make a person an actor. People recite poems and speeches without acting. Musicians rehearse, are concerned with timing, respond to cues. None of these factors defines acting. What the performers say are, almost entirely, direct statements that would be true no matter who was speaking them. In *Offending the Audience* they speak about the performance situation: "You are sitting in rows . . . You are looking at us when we speak to you . . . This is no mirage . . . The possibilities of the theatre are not exploited here." In *Self-Accusation* the two "speakers," as Handke calls them rather than "actors," talk about themselves: "I came into the world . . . I saw . . . I said my name." There is no need to act in order to perform this material.

If *Self-Accusation* were played by a blind "speaker," however, the statement "I saw" would be untrue. Or, to take a somewhat less facetious example from the later passages that are no longer so universally applicable, certain people could not say,

as if they believed it, the line “I came into the world afflicted with original sin” without feigning. But even a blind person could use the word “saw” metaphorically, and Handke does not suggest that each of the lines has to be given as if the speaker believed it. There are interpretations that would avoid any kind of acting during the performance.

These observations are based only on the script, and there is no script, including Handke’s “speak-ins,” that can prevent acting. Let us say that a performer creates an emotion. In *Offending the Audience*, for example, the performer pretends to be angry at the spectators when, actually, he is glad they are there. An element of acting has been added to the performance. The presentation would then be using what I have called simple acting. Under a certain director, each of the actors might even create a well-rounded characterization; the acting could become complex. Given the eagerness of actors to act, it is doubtful whether there has ever been a production of these scripts that did, in fact, avoid the use of acting.

Handke’s *My Foot, My Tutor* makes use of simple acting by reducing the performer’s means: the two characters do not talk, they wear neutral half-masks, and, for the most part, they perform ordinary movements (that sometimes seem extraordinary because they contradict expectancies and do not “fit” the context). The play does involve characters – a Warden and a Ward – but much of the action provokes the question, “What is acted, and what is real?” There is a cat in the play. A cat cannot be trained and does not act. In the performance, “The cat does what it does.” Timing depends on the will of the actor, but the length of one scene depends on the length of time it actually takes water to boil in a tea kettle. The Ward eats an apple just as he would if he were not acting, “as if no one were watching.” Yet he fails, for no reason, to slice a beet with a large and powerful beet-cutting machine: obviously he is only pretending.

These scripts by Peter Handke show, among other things, that the playwright, too, may use an awareness of the acting/not-acting continuum. Although the playwright’s control – exerted only through the written word – over the complexity of acting is limited, he or she may still deal with the nature and degree of acting as an element in the script. And Handke’s early work is another illustration of a general, but not universal, shift among contemporary theatre artists toward simple acting and the not-acting end of the scale.

It must be emphasized that the acting/not-acting scale is not intended to establish or suggest values. Objectively, all points on the scale are equally “good.” It is only personal taste that prefers complex acting to simple acting or nonmatrixed performing to acting. The various degrees of representation and personification are “colors,” so to speak, in the spectrum of human performance; artists may use whichever colors they prefer.

5

“JUST BE YOUR SELF”

Logocentrism and difference in performance theory

Philip Auslander

Among the terms Jacques Derrida employs in his deconstructive critique of Western philosophy, of what he calls the “metaphysics of presence,” are *logocentrism* and *différance* (1978: 279–80). Logocentrism is “the orientation of philosophy toward an order of meaning – thought, truth, reason, logic, the Word – conceived as existing in itself, as foundation” (Curler 1982: 92).¹ Derrida, who denies the existence of such a foundation, points out that every mental or phenomenal event is a product of difference, is defined by its relation to what it is not rather than by its essence. If nothing can legitimately claim to possess a stable, autonomous identity, then there is nothing which can be invested with the authority of *logos*. In his discussions of language and linguistics, Derrida refers frequently to Saussure’s double hypothesis that because the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary, the production of meaning derives from the interaction of linguistic units, not from additive arrangements of nuggets of meaning contained in words.² “The difference which establishes phonemes and lets them be heard remains in and of itself inaudible” (1982: 5); meaning is produced by the action of something which is not present, which exists only as difference. Derrida demonstrates that meaning is generated by a productive non-presence he calls *différance*, defined as “the playing movement that ‘produces,’ but does not precede, differences” (1982: 11). The purpose of signification produces its own significance; there is no transcendent *logos*, no order of meaning which grounds the activity of signification, no presence behind the sign lending it authority.

Derrida’s critique has broad applications to performance theory. In discussion, we often treat acting as philosophers treat language – as a transparent medium which provides access to truth, *logos* or a grounding concept which functions as *logos* within a particular production.³ Such grounding concepts are: the playwright’s vision, the director’s concept or, more interesting, the actor’s self. We often praise acting by calling it “honest” or “self-revelatory,” “truthful”; when we feel we have glimpsed some aspect of the actor’s psyche through her performance, we applaud the actor for “taking risks,” “exposing herself.” One example must stand for many: Joseph Papp was recently quoted as saying: “With Brando in ‘Streetcar’

or Olivier in 'The Entertainer,' the actor exposed himself in such a way that it was a kind of revelation of soul" (quoted in Kakutani 1984: 1).

With what authority can such a statement be made? As semiotists who have studied acting have discovered, the performing actor is an opaque medium, an intertext, not a simple text to be read for "content." We arrive at our perception of a performance by implicitly comparing it with other interpretations of the same role (or with the way we feel the role should be played), or with our recollection of the same actor in other roles, or with our knowledge of the stylistic school to which the actor belongs, the actor's private life, etc.⁴ If our perception of the actor's work derives from this play of differences, how can we claim to be able to read the presence of the actor's self back through that performance?

The problematic of self is, of course, central to performance theory. Theorists as diverse as Stanislavsky, Brecht and Grotowski all implicitly designate the actor's self as the *logos* of performance; all assume that the actor's self precedes and grounds her performance and that it is the presence of this self in performance that provides the audience with access to human truths. Their theories are aptly summarized by a sentence of Joseph Chaikin: "Acting is a demonstration of self with or without a disguise" (1980: 2). For Stanislavsky, the disguise must be based on the actor's own emotional experience; Brecht wants the disguise to be separable from the actor's own persona. Grotowski believes that the actor must use the disguise by her role to cut away the disguise imposed on her by socialization and expose the most basic levels of self. An examination of acting theory through the lens of deconstruction reveals that the self is not an autonomous foundation for acting, but is produced by the performance it supposedly grounds.

Stanislavsky's discourse on acting is inscribed firmly within logocentrism: he insists on the need for logic, coherence and unity – the "unbroken line" – in acting and invokes the authority of such theological concepts as soul and spirit in his writings (1936: 237). There is no question but that the presence of the actor's self as the basis of performance is for him the source of truth in acting: he defines good acting as acting based on the performer's own experience and emotions. He privileges the actor's self over his or her role by stating on the one hand that actor and character should fuse completely in performance (196) and, on the other, that an actor can never play anyone but herself, since she "can't expel [her] soul from [her] body and hire another to replace it" (188). The merging of actor and character thus results exclusively in a fresh presentation (or representation) of self.

This privileging of self is also manifest in another aspect of Stanislavsky's theory. He treats actor and character as autonomous entities, each with its own soul. Because it is impossible for the actor either to divest herself of her own soul or to penetrate fully into another's, she can only hope to find emotions of her own that are analogous (Stanislavsky's word) to the character's (166). The most important terms of that analogy, the choices that make one actor's interpretation of a role different from another's (an essential aspect of the appearance of self-revelation in acting) are determined by the difference between the actor's emotional repertoire and the character's. The uniqueness of the interpretation is a function of this difference, not of the actor's self-presence emanating from her performance.

The actor's self, the basis for an unbroken line of characterization, is itself fragmented. Stanislavsky divides the self into consciousness and the subconscious, identifying the latter as the source of truth, the seat of "emotions that are dearer to

[the actor] than his everyday feelings" (166). As Timothy Wiles notes in his excellent study, *The Theater Event*, Stanislavsky "uncritically equates 'meaning' with psychological 'inner truth,' the imprecise term he uses throughout his work" (Wiles 1980: 20).⁵ Paradoxically, although Stanislavskian performance is grounded in subconscious materials which cannot be perceived or known consciously (13), the (perceived) presence of those materials behind a performance is the only valid criterion for truth in acting. The paradox necessitates the adumbration of a psychotechnique designed to help the actor's conscious self "fool his own nature" (85), the subconscious, into providing inspiration. Stanislavsky posits the presence of self in performance as the highest good, but his psychology is based on the idea that true self-presence is impossible.

Stanislavskian acting can be seen as a form of "writing" in the expanded sense of that word which Derrida uses to describe psychic functions as well as the recording of language. In his reading of Freud, Derrida asserts that the making conscious of unconscious materials is a process of creation, not retrieval: "There is then no unconscious truth to be rediscovered by virtue of having been written elsewhere" (1978: 211). The process of recording unconscious materials itself creates those materials which exist only as traces in the unconscious, not as fully formed data. Thus, "Everything begins with reproduction" (211) and "we are written only as we write" (226). The unconscious is not a source or originary truth – like language, it is subject to the vagaries of mediation.

For the most part, Stanislavsky treats the subconscious as a repository of retrievable data, as in his famous metaphor of the house through which the actor searches for the tiny bead of a particular emotional memory (1936: 164). He acknowledges, however, that memory distorts, that the information we retrieve is not the same as the data we store, adding that distorted memories are of greater use to the actor than accurate ones because they are purified, universalized, and therefore, aesthetic in nature (163). Furthermore, he suggests that it is advisable at times for an actor consciously to alter her experiences prior to recording them in memory so as to make them "more interesting and suited to the theatre than the actual truth" (88). Despite his commitment to the ideal of self-presence, Stanislavsky seems to realize that the self does not exist independently of the processes by which it is revealed to itself and others, that the self which is supposedly exposed through the medium of acting is in fact produced by the mediation of psychotechnique between the conscious and the unconscious levels of the actor's psyche. Earlier I pointed out that the individuality of an actor's interpretation of a role derives from the difference between the actor's emotional repertoire and the character's. It now seems that the actor's emotional repertoire derives in turn from the process of acting itself which necessitates the distortion of emotion memory. The play of difference which produces a particular characterization is produced by the play of difference that defines the acting process. It is not surprising, then, that when Tortsov, Stanislavsky's alter ego in *An Actor Prepares*, is asked by a student whether the actor's subconscious "inspiration is of a secondary rather than a primary origin" (165), he is unable to answer.

Brecht⁶ overturns Stanislavsky's central priority: he privileges the conscious mind over the subconscious because even that level of the psyche has been poisoned by social indoctrination: "it is almost impossible to extract the truth from the

uncensored intuitions of any member of our class society even when a man is a genius" (quoted in Willett 1964: 94). Brecht wants the actor to "Demonstrate [her] knowledge . . . Of human relations, of human behavior, of human capacities" (26) by not allowing herself to be "raped" (93) by the character but by keeping the character at some distance from herself and showing it to the audience. John Rouse indicates that Brecht engaged his actors in a tripartite rehearsal process. After an initial period of acquainting herself with her character and its motivations the actor goes on to a "Stanislavskian" phase of empathetic character work from the "inside." Finally, the actor takes a step back from the character and "examines it once again 'from outside, from the point of view of society'" (see Chapter 17) and incorporates this point of view into the "gest of showing" which underlies Brechtian performance (Willett 1964: 136, 203). Brecht privileges the actor over the character, but for a different reason than Stanislavsky: in order that the actor's commentary on the character be meaningful to the audience, the actor must be present as herself as well as in character and her own persona must carry greater authority than the role.

But what is this actorly persona? Roland Barthes suggests that "the [Brechtian] actor must present the very knowledge of the play's meaning . . . The actor must prove . . . that he guides meaning toward its ideality" (1977: 75). Timothy Wiles enlarges on this description by indicating that the Brechtian actor "feigns to inhabit a position of knowledge that is superior to the audience" (1980: 82); the actor "speaks from the position of a Marxist utopia in which the problems of the play that Brecht suggests *can* be solved *have been* solved" (80). To guide the play's meaning properly, the actor must pretend to possess knowledge which, historically, he or she cannot possess. The persona that the Brechtian actor presents alongside of the character that she portrays is a fictional creation.

What is the basis for this fictional persona? Barthes and Wiles both indicate that this persona is in service to the play's meaning, an observation which leads us by a circuitous route back to a basic form of logocentrism. Wiles suggests convincingly that the actor's pretended persona is an ironic stance adopted partly as a gesture of hostility toward the audience (82). In the *Short Organon*, Brecht himself proposes another view:

Without opinions and objectives one can represent nothing at all. Without knowledge one can show nothing; how could one know what would be worth knowing? Unless the actor is satisfied to be a parrot or a monkey he must master our period's knowledge of human social life by himself joining in the war of the classes.

(Brecht 1964b: 196)

Brecht implies that in order for the actor to possess the authority to comment on her character and the play from the proper sociological perspective the actor must be able to ground her commentary in personal social experience, the kind of experience that is as important for Brecht as private emotional experience is for Stanislavsky. Brecht's exhortation of the actor is not all that different in spirit from Tortsov's declaration to his students that "a real artist must lead a full, interesting, beautiful, varied, exacting and inspiring life" (Stanislavsky 1936: 181).

The dilemma of Brechtian performance is that for all of Brecht's emphasis on rationality and the undermining of theatrical illusion, the actor must convincingly portray something that she is not, the persona Barthes calls the "master of

meaning" (1977: 75). Brecht's solution to this dilemma is to ground the actor's persona as actor in the actor's life experience as a social being. Unlike Stanislavsky, Brecht does not detail the technique by which the actor translates experience into performance (Rouse points out that Brechtian acting has more to do with an overall approach than with a specific methodology) but it is clear that the presence of the social self in performance is important to Brecht, who has as little use for the parrot-actor and the monkey-actor as Stanislavsky has for the representational actor. Although the ideological gap between Brecht and Stanislavsky is wide, the ethos behind their respective theories of acting is the same: performance can be truthful only if it invokes the presence of the actor's self. Brecht is more overtly aware than Stanislavsky of the nature of the theatre as 'writing'; he defines a number of concepts which expose the mechanics of theatrical signification, but he does not escape the seemingly inevitable grounding even of this exposure in presence.

Grotowski's privileging of self is more radical than either Stanislavsky's or Brecht's. He is concerned with the relation of the "mask of lies" we wear in everyday life to the "secret motor" behind the mask (1968: 46, 52). By confronting the everyday self with "its deep roots and hidden motives" (52), Grotowski hopes to produce revelation, "an excess of truth" (53). The actor uses the "role as if it were a surgeon's scalpel, to dissect himself . . . The important thing is to use the role as a trampoline, an instrument with which to study what is hidden behind our everyday mask – the innermost core of our personality – in order to sacrifice it, expose it" (37). This act of self-exposure and sacrifice is an invitation to the spectator to do the same thing on a less extreme level, to discover and confront the truth about herself (37). Grotowski privileges the self over the role in that the role is primarily a tool for self-exposure. Also, the self is not simply determined by the "secret motor" Grotowski wishes to uncover: "While retaining our private experiences, we can attempt to incarnate myth, putting on its ill-fitting skin to perceive the relativity of our problems, their connection to the 'roots,' and the relativity of the 'roots' in light of today's experience" (23). To some degree, Grotowski privileges the self over archetypal experience and truths to which the self is answerable but which are also answerable to the self. The Poor Theatre is not only of the self but for the self – its purpose is to serve as therapy for both actor and spectator (46).⁷

What is the language of self-revelation? Derrida writes that the self "is inscribed in language, is a 'function' of language, becomes a *speaking* subject only by making its speech conform to the system of the rules of language as a system of differences" (1982: 15). The self is inseparable from the language by which it expresses itself: it is a function of and does not precede that language. Grotowski proposes to eschew dependence on verbal language in the theatre, preferring "an elementary language of signs and sound – comprehensible beyond the semantic value of the word even to a person who does not understand the language in which the play is performed" (1968: 24). This language is made up of ideograms, physical expressions of basic psychic movements: "we attempt to eliminate the [actor's] organism's resistance to this psychic process. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction. Impulse and action are concurrent: the body vanishes, burns and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses" (16). Grotowski suggests that a physical language could surmount the mediation of difference by becoming

transparent and making psychic impulses directly visible to an audience. He grounds self-presence in physical presence, a seemingly irrefutably originary presence.

But even if the time-lapse which Grotowski describes is eliminated, it is not clear that the body transcends the play of difference that constitutes language. Derrida, through his reading of Artaud, points out that the body too is constituted by difference:

Organization is articulation, the interlocking of functions or of members . . . , the labor and play of their differentiation. . . . The division of the body into organs, the difference interior to the flesh, opens the lock through which the body becomes absent from itself, passing itself off as, and taking itself for, the mind. . . . The organ welcomes the difference of the stranger into my body: it is always the organ of my ruin, and this truth is so original that neither the heart, the central organ of life, nor the sex, the first organ of life, can escape it.

(Derrida 1978: 186)

Because it is organized, the body is not an organic, undifferentiated presence. The internal division of the body means that we are “several” to begin with, to paraphrase another passage from Derrida (1978: 226), and permits confusion between self and other, mind and body. The body is not more purely present to itself than is the mind and is therefore no more autonomous a foundation for communication than is verbal language. Grotowski would like to see the body vanish and burn in the communication of psychic impulses, but such a neat division between psyche and body is not possible if the body “passes itself off as, and takes itself for, the mind.” Pure physical expression of and by the body is impossible for a body which is differentiated within itself and not present to itself. The mind cannot communicate the body without being defined by “the rules of language as a system of differences” and the body cannot express the mind without being defined by its own system of differences. Pure self-exposure is no more possible on a physical level than on a verbal level because of the mediation of difference.

It has not been my purpose to discredit the theories under discussion here. I want to indicate their dependence on logocentrism and certain concepts of self and presence. Stanislavsky states that the actor’s self is the basis of performance, but his own working out of this idea leads him to posit that the self is produced by the process of acting. Brecht would have the actor partly withhold her presence from the character she plays in order to comment on it. To do so, however, the actor must endow another fictional persona with the authority of full presence, a theoretical movement which makes Brecht’s performance theory subject to the same deconstructive critique of presence as Stanislavsky’s. Grotowski proposes the actor’s body as an absolute presence which banishes difference, but does not take into account the action of difference within the body. It is not a question of discarding these theories or of ironing out inconsistencies within them, but of recognizing that they are subject to the limits of the metaphysical assumptions on which they are based. If we are to use them, we must realize that, like metaphysics, they demand that we speak of acting in terms of presence, we are referring metaphorically to the creation of “self” from the play of difference which makes up theatrical discourse.

Derrida’s philosophy is descriptive and analytical, not prescriptive or programmatic: deconstruction cannot exist independently of the thing it deconstructs. We

cannot build a philosophy on *différance*, for to treat *différance* as originary is a contradiction in terms: "To say that *différance* is originary is simultaneously to erase the myth of a present origin" (1978: 203). Derrida acknowledges that *différance* is itself a manifest term for something which properly has no name and does not exist (1982: 26–7). He therefore resorts to such measures as coining some words and crossing out others to indicate, in the first case, the need to refer to conceptual non-entities and, in the second, the inescapable use of terms the validity of which he denies.

In a well known essay on Levi-Strauss, Derrida writes that there are two responses to the realization that all is difference, to "the lost or impossible presence of the absent origin." One is the "saddened, *negative*, nostalgic, guilty" response which "dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play and the order of the sign" (1978: 292). It seems to me that most performance theory falls into this category. Having lost what we still suspect was the only valid theatre, the theatre of communal ritual, we either rhapsodize about theatres of other times and places or attempt to ground theatrical activity in versions of presence which bear the stamp of secularism, psychology or political analysis in the place of religion. The other response is what Derrida describes as the response "which is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name of man being the name of the being who . . . throughout his entire history, has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of the play" (1978: 292). "Play is the disruption of presence" (292); an affirmation of the play which makes meaning at once possible and impossible is the alternative to the yearning for presence.

There is no need for a poetics of acting based on play: for Derrida, the play of difference is all there is; the question is whether or not we choose to acknowledge it. Acting, like any form of "writing," can express the two responses Derrida mentions: the actor can either hanker after presence or indulge in play which affirms the indeterminacy of meaning. Performance equivalents for Derrida's practice of writing "under erasure," using language bound up in the metaphysics of presence and crossing it out, might simultaneously use the vocabularies of conventional acting methods and styles and undermine them. Brecht obviously moved in this direction, but although his theory allows for the creation of many, even contradictory meanings in a performance, the implication is that a resolution of these conflicts is possible and desirable since that would imply the resolution of social conflicts. Another interesting example is the practice of "transformational acting" pioneered by the Open Theatre. The "style Transformation" is an exercise in which "the theatrical or sociological style of a scene is transformed (restoration comedy to soap opera to Brechtian *Lehrstücke* to Hollywood melodrama) in the course of an improvisation" (Pasolli 1972: 21). To some extent, performance in which the actor moves from style to style from role to role self-consciously dramatizes the construction of the actor's self from the language of theatre. In practice, however, these tactics, like Brecht's, produce polysemy, multiple meanings which imply the presence of an "horizon" of meaning not the open, ungrounded play of signification to which Derrida refers (Derrida 1981b: 350). The one example I can think of which might illustrate "post-Derridean" acting comes from Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien* (c. 1773). Diderot describes a party stunt for which David Garrick would place his head between folding doors and run through a gamut of facial expressions

associated with particular emotions. As Diderot realized, Garrick's dissociation of signifier and signified raised vital questions on the relation of the actor's self and her expressive means (1970: 168). Importantly, this example is an instance of literal play: Garrick's performance was not grounded in any meaning; it was a gratuitous demonstration of pure signification.

How far one could extend Garrick's game and still create satisfying performance is probably a matter of opinion. (It may be an historical issue, for our period forms part of the history of logocentrism and of the "metaphysics of presence.")

Perhaps the actor can deconstruct her own work only to a limited extent within that work and it is the audience which makes the fundamental decision of whether to search for presence and determined meaning in a performance or to revel in the play of ungrounded significations.⁸ Deconstruction, fundamentally, is the perception of *differance*. Whether or not the person who inevitably records the play of difference in art can also point it out is an open question.

"I am afraid of falling into philosophy . . . "

– Tortsov in *An Actor Prepares*

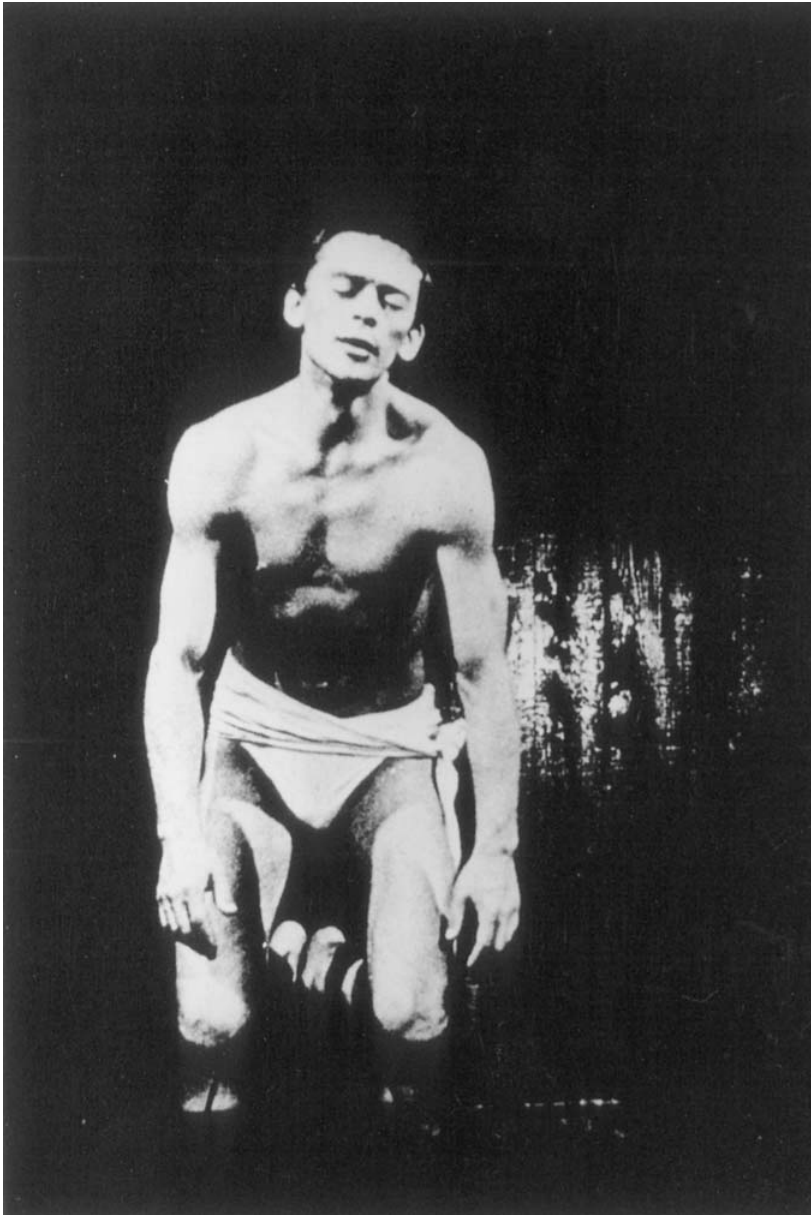


Fig. 5.1 Ryszard Cieślak in *Książe Niezłomny (The Constant Prince)* by Jerzy Grotowski (1965). Text by Calderon; Polish translation by Juliusz Słowacki. Author of the scenario and director: Jerzy Grotowski. Designed by Jerzy Gurawski. Costumes by Waldemar Krygier. Teatr Laboratorium 13 Rzędów (Polish Laboratory Theatre of 13 Rows) Wrocław, Poland.

6

THE ACTOR'S EMOTIONS RECONSIDERED: A psychological task-based perspective

Elly Konijn

Although it is hard to tell what they feel;
Actors acting emotions is real.

(J.F. Hoorn, 2001)

INTRODUCTION

It is a widespread and popular notion that the emotional experiences of the actors themselves (should) parallel the impersonated character-emotions onstage. However, already in *Paradoxe sur le Comédien*, Diderot (1773) stated the opposite: The genius actor feels nothing at all in order to get the audience maximally involved in the staged character-emotions. Long lasting and heated debates continued among theatre practitioners and theoreticians about the relationships between the actors' emotions and the portrayed emotions of the characters onstage. Accumulation of evidence from anecdotal material never before led to a systematic test of the conflicting viewpoints.

Because the problem stated by the *Paradoxe* is a psychological one in nature, as are emotions, I applied contemporary research from the field of emotion psychology to the problem of the art of acting. Views on acting emotions in current acting theories were then related to the cognitive emotion theory of Frijda (1986), hence developing a new perspective on acting, called the task-emotion theory. The theoretical claims were further tested against the actors' emotional lives onstage in their theatre practice. A questionnaire was sent to hundreds of professional actors and actresses in the Netherlands, Flanders, and the United States. Statistical analyses revealed that the actors themselves hardly experienced the represented emotions of their characters. How then is the illusion of spontaneity of the portrayed emotional expressions arrived at? What is emotionally transpiring onstage as the performers mesmerize their spectators? This chapter tries to answer these questions in the light of commonly held views on acting.

THEATRICAL PERSPECTIVE ON ACTING EMOTIONS

The well-known involvement viewpoint on acting is expressed in the following quote from a recent documentary on Dutch television:¹ “The actor must be going through whatever the character he’s playing is going through,” a famous director once wrote. “The emotions must be real, not pretended. . . . Their rage and anguish are no imitation. They have to summon their grief and anger from deep within themselves.” On the contrary, Diderot (1773) stated that the professional actor should not experience the emotions of the character himself in order to arouse emotions of similar intensity in the spectator. Today the contradiction is referred to as the actor’s dilemma – whether to feel or not to feel (Emmet, 1975; Roach, 1985; Flaherty, 1990). When the actor wonders “how to act emotions,” s/he can hardly escape the actor’s dilemma.

Contemporary views on acting can be described concisely in three main streams regarding the relation between the actor’s emotions and the portrayed character-emotions. First, the prevailing actor training in the US, and popular in Europe, is called *method acting* (Brumm, 1973; Chambers, 2000). Method acting was developed by Lee Strasberg (1988), after his interpretation of Konstantin Stanislavsky’s work on acting, seeking “(emotional) truth on stage.” This *involvement* acting style advocates that the actor should immerse himself in the emotions of the character he portrays in order to convey a convincing expression – an appearance of spontaneous emotion. The effect on the spectator aimed for is involvement, identification, and empathy with character.

A second main stream in acting styles is the so-called *detachment* approach, which is based on the work of Meyerhold (Braun 1969; Hoover 1974) and Brecht (1967–1968). Different from Stanislavsky (Kesting, 1989), in this view the actor should not experience the portrayed character-emotions himself. In line with Diderot, Meyerhold and Brecht thought the emotionally detached actor more capable of arousing intense emotional effects in the spectator via a reflection on the character and on situational demands.

As a third main stream in acting styles, I have distinguished the *self-expressive* approach. Within many diverse theatrical developments in the 60s and 70s, such as the *Living Theatre* and *Happenings*, with respect to the expression of emotion there was a common, central notion: the actor’s self-expression. Grotowski (1968) and Brook (1969) are the most well known contributors. The self-expressive acting style proposes that the actor presents “his/her most authentic self” on stage, with the intended effect on the spectator of touching the inner self and “unmasking” of the spectator. The character serves as a vehicle for the actor’s self-expression, which is contrary to the involvement style.

Within these three different acting styles, the solutions offered to the actor’s dilemma do not appear to be very different. The actor is supposed to be especially gifted with a “double consciousness.” By doing so, the problem is shifted to the different meanings the different authors attach to the concept of double consciousness. So, if the actor is not struggling with the paradox, he is struggling with the actor’s dilemma or his special gift of a double consciousness. In any case, the actor remains puzzled. However, I have traced four main acting tasks which are implicitly shared by the different authors on acting.

Within each acting style it can be found that the actor who performs emotions on stage must, as a first task, create an inner model of the intended character-emotion. Most clearly, this is stated by Diderot with the formulation of a “*modèle idéal*” and by Meyerhold with “*obraz*” (in Pesochinsky, 1992). It concerns the image of the character (-emotion) created by the actor, in which the characteristic or universal features of daily life (emotional) behaviour is captured. This inner model in the actor’s imagination serves as his guideline during performance. According to Diderot and Meyerhold this inner model should encompass daily life (or nature) itself, whereas Stanislavsky and Strasberg strive after the creation of an inner model that compares as closely as possible with daily life – realistic or naturalistic behaviour.

A second acting task can be found in the objective to portray credible and convincing emotional expressions. According to Stanislavsky and Strasberg the credibility of portrayed character-emotions will naturally follow as a result of involvement in the character (by means of emotional memory). Credibility of emotional content in a performance, according to Brecht, is arrived at by clarifying the social context in which the characters find themselves and the relationships between different characters. According to Brook and Grotowski (among others) the expressions of the actor’s own inner feelings will naturally be credible and convincing.

Further, the actor must repeat a more or less fixed form, a third acting task. Most clearly this is found in Grotowski’s writing when he speaks about the score and musical notation in comparing acting with a musical performance. Meyerhold (in Pesochinsky, 1992) is also very clear about the composition of a more or less fixed form, for which the Russian word ‘*amplua*’ is suitable: a fixed or stable pattern of behaviour that belongs to a specific type of character – although this should not be understood as a rigid form.

Finally, the actor must create the illusion of spontaneity, genuineness and a “real life” appearance of emotional expressions. According to the involvement acting style this requirement is met naturally when the actor “lives through” the character-emotions on stage. The self-expression style seeks “real” spontaneity and authentic emotional expressions of the actor by emphasizing improvisation and achieving presence during performance. In Barba and Savarese (1991) stress on energy and presence is found, which is achieved through “extra daily techniques.” According to Brecht, the “real life” aspect of acting comes by presenting “possible” circumstances which trigger recognition and associations in the spectator, and also via effects resulting from “*Verfremdung*” techniques such as “stepping out of the role” when the actor addresses the audience by commenting on his character.

Another implicit point of agreement between the different views on acting is that the actor is usually understood to operate on different levels of enactment during stage acting.² The actor (1) acts on stage as a private person with his daily life affairs; (2) works on stage as a craftsman, trying to perform his acting tasks, or job, as well as possible; (3) operates on the level of the inner model of the character to be performed in the actor’s imagination; and (4) behaves on the level of the realised character performed on stage. Consequently, differentiating between levels of enactment implies that different levels of emotions should be distinguished, which cannot be found in performance analyses. At each level of enactment an emotional layer can be defined, with which the actor has to cope.

Scheme 1: Levels of enactment and emotion.

LEVELS OF ENACTMENT	→	EMOTION LEVELS
– private person		– private emotions
– actor-craftsman		– task-emotions
– inner model		– intended emotions
– performed character		– character-emotions

Emotions at the level of the actor-craftsman hardly ever come into view in traditional views on acting, except for, incidentally, stage fright or concentration. Usually the character-emotions are related to the so-called private emotions of the actor, referring to questions like ‘is Meryl Streep feeling as sad as Sophie is supposed to be?’ Moreover, the actor’s craft is mainly analysed from a spectators’ point of view, that is, the observed character (-emotion) is the point of departure. This implies that only the so-called basic or prototypical emotions are taken into consideration (see Ekman, 1982; Izard, 1992); characters usually are carriers of “big” emotions such as love, hate, anger, jealousy, sadness, fear (Polti, 1990).

TASK-EMOTION THEORY ON ACTORS’ EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES

The actor’s point of view onstage is performing a particular task – conveying an image of a character (-emotion) as convincing and believable as possible to the audience. To determine the actor’s emotions from his/her perspective I used contemporary emotion psychology. Cognitive emotion theory (e.g., Lazarus, 1982; Frijda, 1986; 1988) states that emotions arise from an individual’s interaction with the environment and that they are functional reactions regarding an individual’s concerns in coping with environmental demands. If situational demands impinge upon an individual’s concerns, an emotion will arise, either because his concerns are threatened or the situation offers a potential satisfaction of personal interests, motives or goals. The result of the interaction between individual concerns and situational demands is called the situational meaning-structure, which forms the basis of an emotional experience and defines a specific emotion (Frijda, 1986). Therefore, the quality of the actor’s real emotions onstage will be determined by the situational meaning-structure of the performance situation, rather than by the emotions of the character. In describing the situational meaning-structure from the perspective of the actor onstage, we must take into account his main concerns, on the one hand, and the particular components in the situational context that impinge upon the actor’s concerns, on the other hand.

The actor’s task concerns. – From a psychological point of view, at least four main concerns of professional actors can be traced as relevant in the acting situation: competence, sensation seeking, image, and aesthetic concerns. The relevance of the competency-concern to an actor is especially emphasized because he has to perform complex tasks in front of evaluative audiences which demand a high level of competence regarding the task performance (after Zajonc and Sales, 1966; Bond and Titus, 1983). It is the actor’s concern to be considered as a competent actor, to show in his own peculiar way his competence and skills to portray a character or role, in a direct confrontation with the audience. To acquire skills and techniques to

cope with environmental demands, one's own desires and emotions, the need for self-development and self-esteem are regarded as central drives related to the concept of competence (Frijda, 1986; White, 1959). For an actor it is not possible to conceal lack of competence.

Presenting oneself in front of an audience is generally considered a stressful task (Jackson and Latané, 1981; Martin, 1990). Psychophysiological studies have shown that actors experience very high levels of stress during performances (Weisweiler, 1983; 1985; Konijn, 1991; 1992). Therefore, primary concerns and driving forces of the actor relate to what is called sensation seeking (Zuckerman, 1979; 1980). Sensation seeking concerns the need for excitement and suspense and the willingness to seek activities that involve a certain risk, either in a physical or a social sense. This probably applies to actors who choose to expose themselves in such stressful situations, almost daily, as a profession.

In addition, the actor will be concerned about his image. Image building is closely related to concerns over the impression one creates among others, not wanting to harm one's self-image by 'losing face', and the general concern for approval and recognition. Impression management and presentation of self are considered central drives for human behaviour in social situations (Goffman, 1959; Snyder, 1974). Conveying the 'right' image is important with regard to his reputation as an actor and his self-respect. He will be evaluated not only as a character, but as a professional actor and person as well.

Finally, the need to 'create something beautiful', to be creative and original are driving forces of the performing artist. This concern of the actor relates to aesthetic motives (Wang, 1984). The actor's aesthetic concerns can be met by reaching high degrees in the artistic design of the performance, in beautiful enactment, in a smooth display of character-emotions, and so on, but they can be provoked when the director asks the actor to perform in a distasteful way. For example, the actor can enjoy beauty in the way in which he portrays the anger of his character. The object of emotion then is enjoying the act of performing anger in an aesthetic way, rather than involvement in the character-emotion.

Specific components in the performance situation. – The situational meaning-structure during stage acting is dominated by the actor's awareness of attentive spectators, who generally have high expectations and a critical, evaluative attitude toward what is shown on stage. Therefore, evaluation of the professional acting situation includes high levels of *objectivity* ("there's no escape") and *reality* of the performance situation, which are necessary to arouse an emotion (Frijda, 1986; 1988). A situation must be appraised as real, and individual concerns must really be hit to arouse a real emotion. These conditions are met when an actor is exposed to the audience.

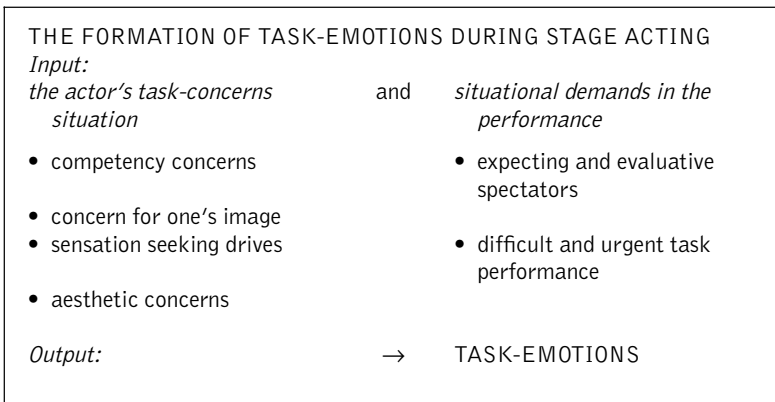
Further, the portrayal of convincing character-emotions and captivating and moving the spectator, is a difficult and complex (*high demand*) task. The actor must fulfil a high level of requirements within a relatively short period of time. The actor can show his skills only as long as the performance lasts. This differs from most other work situations. The appraisal of the performance situation as a *difficult* one and the urgency of demands ("the audience is waiting now!"), stir high intensities of emotions in the actor. In addition, the degree of (*un-*)*familiarity* of the performance situation is important to further define the quality and intensity of the specific emotion aroused in the actor. Unfamiliar aspects in the situation, like

tonight's particular audience and the alertness of fellow actors, may heighten the demand character.

To be able to cope with these high demand aspects of the situation, a high level of *control* over the situation, one's acting skills, and even the spectator's attention, is needed. A positive or negative *valence* of emotions is dependent on one's capacities to overcome potential risks of failure and to transform them into a successful performance. For the actor, both to fail and to succeed will have extreme consequences; his task concerns will be severely threatened or optimally satisfied.

Thus, the situational meaning-structure of the performance induces intense emotions in the actor related to accomplishment in his profession. Scheme 2 summarizes the general emotion process of an actor's emotions on stage during a public performance, from the actor's point of view.

Scheme 2: The basis of the emotion process while acting onstage.



The merging of potential risks, difficulty, and urgency with control, a generally positive valence, a certain degree of unfamiliarity, and a high demand character are components that refer to the meaning-structure of challenge (cf. Frijda et al., 1989). Challenge is considered a central emotion during the performance of acting tasks, provided that rehearsals were successful, which may lead to the optimal experience of flow (Csikzentmihalyi and Csikzentmihalyi, 1988; 1992). Thus, an actor experiences emotions related to challenge; generally positive feelings of concentration, excitement, tension, flow, courage, guts, strength, and so forth. Such task-emotions can be considered real and strong emotions in the acting situation, because they relate to basic concerns associated with relevant components in a performance context. These emotions are dominated by the typical action tendencies related to challenge, such as impulses "to approach and overcome difficulties" (after Frijda, 1986; Frijda et al., 1989).

In conclusion, it will be clear, theoretically, that task-emotions are of a different nature than the emotions the actor has to portray on stage as a character, emerging from different situational meaning-structures. How can the expression of character-emotions be understood in the light of the task-emotions of the actor?

During the play character-emotions are usually negative ones only turning into positive ones at the end of the play (when the hero succeeds), whereas task-emotions of actors in performance are usually positive. Following the task-emotion

theory, the actual context of the performance situation *in itself* is a source of intense emotions for the actor as a craftsman. The actor may shape his task-emotions so that the display of task-emotions merges with the expression of character-emotions that are perceived by the spectator. Frijda (1986) considers regulation of emotions in daily life as usually directed at reducing the negative or distorting side effects of emotional experiences. In my view, the actor uses regulation of emotions during stage acting in a positive way, which I therefore call shaping of emotions instead of regulation. I assume that by shaping his task-emotions so as to fit into the outer or visible form of portrayed character-emotions, the actor's task-emotions lend support to the appearance of "warmth" and "liveliness" of the represented character-emotions.

Task-emotions do not have characteristic facial expressions and therefore cannot be interpreted on their own, on the basis of the expression of task-emotions alone (Konijn, 1994; 2000). The physiological consequences of task-emotions become apparent in details of the expression, like a sharp readiness, an increased awareness, presence, tenseness, alertness, excitement, warmth, goal-orientedness, and so on. They can probably be seen and "felt" by the spectator, but the particular features of task-emotions are not specific to a certain kind of emotion. The general action tendencies accompanying task-emotions, like impulses to approach and "to go at it," are then in accordance with the presupposed action tendencies involved in approaching the dramatic conflict by main characters in general. They run up against difficulties, attack their antagonists and try to remove obstacles to reach their goals. The (felt impulses of) actors' task-emotions can therefore, I presume, empower the representation of the (supposed action tendencies of) character-emotions.

Spectators will perceive and recognize the emotional expressions on the stage. However, psychological studies on the recognition and credibility of posed and spontaneous emotional expressions show that observers in general are not able to distinguish between feigned and spontaneous emotional expressions and they do not read the relevant cues in determining whether an emotion is real or feigned (Frijda, 1986; Hess & Kleck, 1990; 1994; Shields, 1984). Observers even sometimes ascribe more credibility to posed emotional expressions than they do to spontaneous ones (e.g., Wallbott, 1988), or, as Nummenmaa (1990) found, expressions seem to be more easily identified if the actor did *not* try to feel the emotion too deeply. Gosselin et al. (1995) found that the emotional facial expressions of six actors were only half of the time closer to the expression of genuinely experienced emotion, than the portrayals of unfeigned emotions. Moreover, decoders of the actors' emotional portrayals were found to be accurate in recognizing the emotional category but *not* in judging the encoding condition (felt or unfeigned; Gosselin et al., 1995). Thus, there even appears no actual need for an actor to experience character-emotions in order to put across character-emotions to an audience convincingly.

Probably, spectators need additional information from situational cues, the dynamics of the emotional expression, and the context in which the emotion occurs to determine the particular kind of emotion. The behaviour and expressions of the actor will thus be analysed and interpreted in accordance with the dramatic circumstances of the character and the dramatic context of the play, whereas the perceived "authenticity" of the emotional expression may stem from the radiation of underlying real task-emotions and related action tendencies. The radiation of

task-emotions of the actor in performance probably contributes to his power to convince, to the actor's presence, the liveliness of the expression, and to the illusion of spontaneity of character-emotions.

EMPIRICAL TEST OF ACTING THEORIES

The theoretical assumptions about emotions in actors are summarized above and reflect four different views on acting: involvement, self-expression, detachment, and the task-emotion theory. Based on these views, three hypotheses were generated. (1) The involvement hypothesis stating that the emotions of the actor correspond to the portrayed character-emotions (the self-expression view leads to a comparable hypothesis, though reversed). (2) The detachment hypothesis stating that the actor has no emotions while performing a character. (3) The task-emotion theory stating that actors do not experience emotions that parallel the portrayed character-emotions, but rather do experience task-emotions. These hypotheses were tested in two separate studies. The results will be summarized in the following.

Method. – Questionnaire data were obtained from 341 professional actors: 114 in the Netherlands and Flanders (Dutch speaking part of Belgium) and 227 American stage professionals, randomly chosen from member lists of actors' unions. They had more than three years of professional acting experience; most had more than 10 years of professional experience in acting and graduated from an actor training program. In the questionnaire the actors were asked to select an emotional role from a public performance they recently played and which they still could remember well. Questions were answered separately for character and actor. It is important to note that the actors could reply anonymously in order to avoid the influence of social desirability in their answers.

All questions concerned emotions during a live performance and pertained to only a small part in a recent role, which provided respondents with a concrete focus on which to base their answers. The questionnaire contained guidelines about the conditions the chosen scene needed to meet, such as that the scene had to be played during one of the last performances in a series and not in a premiere. Twenty-six positive and negative emotion words covered both the prototypical emotions (e.g., disgust, sadness, in love, pleasure) and the task-emotions (e.g., challenge, concentration, shame, nervousness). In addition, various levels of enactment were distinguished. This involved asking about (1) which emotions were intended to be portrayed in the role (i.e., what was the actor's assignment?), (2) which character-emotions were actually realized during performance and (3) which emotions the actor experienced just prior to the start of the performance and (4) during the performance. A comparison of the actor's emotions during and immediately before the performance provided information about the nature of task-emotions.

Further questions concerned the acting style the actor had applied. In order to be able to classify an actor as being primarily an involvement actor or a detachment actor, twenty statements were formulated referring indirectly to either the involvement or detachment style of acting. Information about the general preference for an acting style could be obtained indirectly by asking the actors how they thought other qualified actors achieved their results. The responses about general preference were crosschecked with that actor's responses on acting emotions and the acting style he had applied. The questions, organized into seven sections, generally

asked the respondent to indicate the degree to which the answer was appropriate, which could be indicated on a Likert scale ranging from ‘not at all’ (0), ‘to a limited extent’ (1), ‘to a great extent’ (2) to ‘to a very great extent’ (3).

RESULTS

The Involvement Hypothesis

In order to test the involvement hypothesis, a comparison was made between the actor’s own emotions and the represented character-emotions. The comparison concerns the prototypical emotions, which are typical features of characters and presupposed to underlie identification. Figure 6.1a and 6.1b display the results of the Dutch/Flemish actors and the American respondents, respectively. The figures compare the mean rated intensities of portrayed character-emotions (solid line) and the mean emotional experiences as indicated by the professional actors for themselves (dashed line).

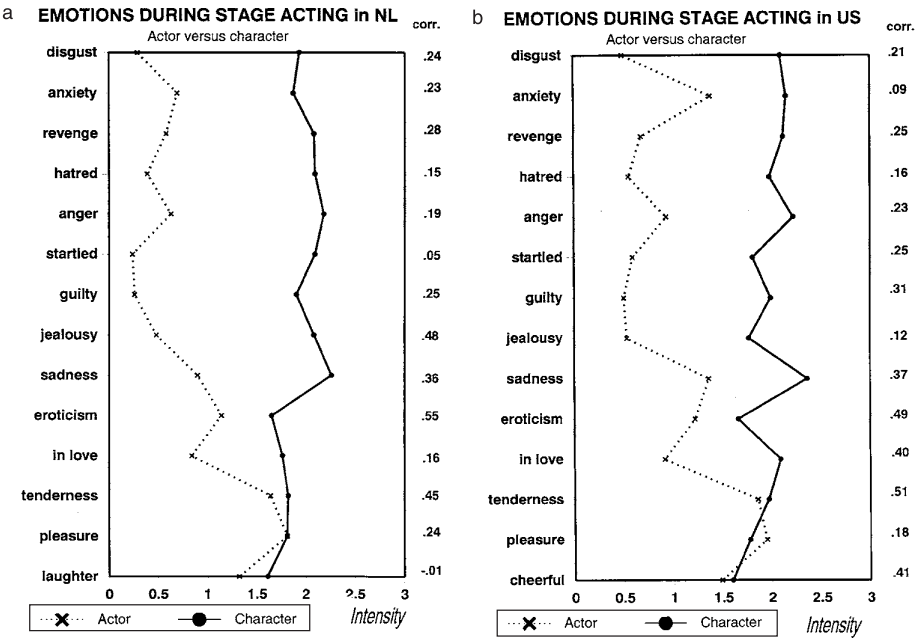


Fig. 6.1a Emotions during stage acting in Netherlands: actor versus character.

Fig. 6.1b Emotions during stage acting in U.S.: actor versus character.

Note. Figure 6.1 shows the average intensities of reported emotions, of the actor himself, indicated by the dashed line, as well as of the portrayed character-emotions, indicated by the solid line. On the vertical axis the different emotions are given. The average intensities of each separate emotion are shown on the horizontal axis. The emotional intensities range from 0 (no emotion at all) to 3 (the particular emotion is felt or performed very strongly). On the right hand side of the figure, the correlations (corr.) are shown.

As can be seen, the mean intensities of the character-emotions on stage were stronger than the actor's own emotional intensities, except for tenderness, pleasure, and cheerfulness. It seemed as though the actors actually experienced these latter emotions when portraying them in characters. However, if mean intensities of emotion do not differ, this does not necessarily imply that the emotions are similar. In addition, related emotions may not necessarily have the same intensities. It appears that different means are not decisive here, because one can think of a weak reflection of the character-emotions in the actor, that is, their emotions may be related although the emotions portrayed as a character are stronger than those experienced by the actor. Thus, the strengths of the associations are more decisive for which Pearson's correlations were calculated between the actor's emotions and the character-emotions (see right hand side of Figure 6.1).

Because many emotions did not apply to individual actors, only those actors were included in the analysis that attributed the emotion under consideration to the character. For example, only if a character is attributed sadness, does it make sense to check whether the actor feels sad as well. It appeared that, applying a criterion of $r = .60$ and $p < .001$ (Konijn, 1994; 1999), none of the actors' emotions can be considered to correspond to the represented character-emotions on stage. Thus, despite the equal average intensities of pleasure in the actor and the character's pleasure presented on stage, they do not run in parallel.

Intended and Performed Character-Emotions

It is conceivable that the differences found between the portrayed character-emotions and the emotions experienced by actors themselves might be due to "bad acting." To test whether the actors impersonated their characters in a proper way, that is, the way they had intended to according to their preparations, the intended emotions (as part of the character portrayal) were compared with the actually portrayed emotions (i.e. the character-emotions) during the scenes chosen. The results show that the mean intensities of the intended character-emotions are almost identical to the actually performed character-emotions and strong and significant correlations were found between them (Figures 6.2a and 6.2b). The lack of correspondence between the actors' emotions and the characters' discussed above, can therefore not be attributed to an inadequate performance.

The roles studied have a wide variety of emotional content, answers were collected for different sorts of emotions, i.e., anger as well as tenderness. Characteristic emotions of the main characters are considered to be mainly so-called prototypical emotions (Laffont, 1960; Polti, 1990; Mesquita, 1993). The prototypical emotions are indeed reported both as the most intense emotions which it was the actor's prior intention to portray, and as the character-emotions actually realised during performance.

The Importance of Acting Style

When the actors under study applied different acting styles, differences in the degree to which the character-emotions and actors' own emotions coincide might appear in their data. Therefore, additional comparisons were made with two sub-groups based on their responses to the statements referring to the acting styles of

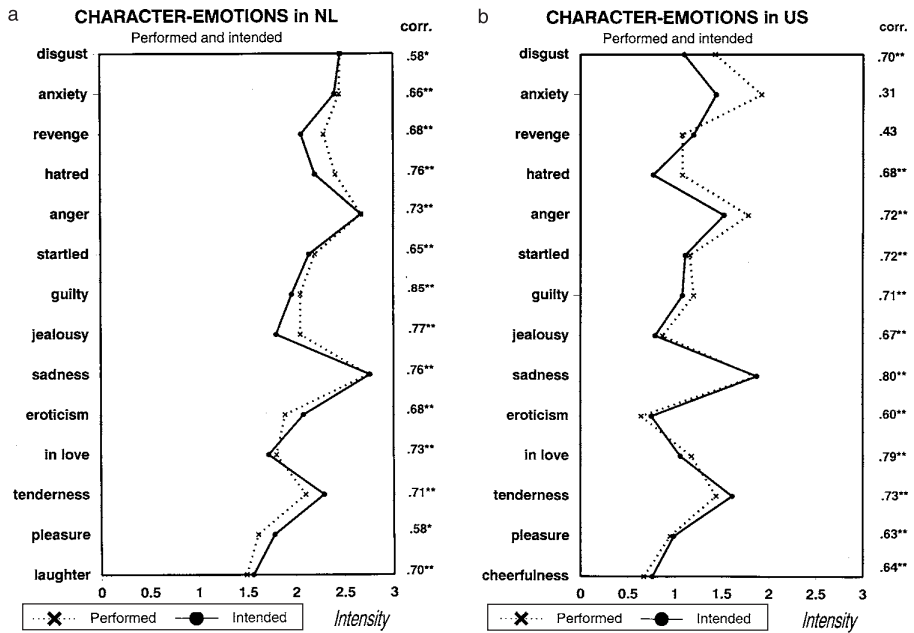


Fig. 6.2a Character-emotions in Netherlands: performed and intended.

Fig. 6.2b Character-emotions in U.S.: performed and intended.

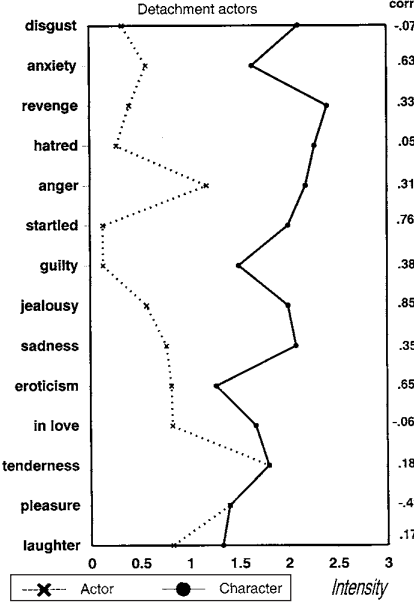
detachment and involvement. The quartile percentage groups of actors who predominantly used a style of detachment and those who predominantly used a style of involvement were selected, on the basis of their report about the particular acting style the actor used during the chosen parts.

In general, within the detachment group, only incidental correspondence was found between the portrayed character-emotions and the emotions felt by the actors (Figure 6.3a and 6.3b). However, the same holds for the involvement group (Figure 6.4a and 6.4b). Overall, the results for both subgroups were not really distinct, despite their opposing acting styles. Analyses of the data about the particular acting style used by the actors during performance revealed that involvement and detachment could not be considered as two opposing acting styles when it concerns acting emotions, whereas it is precisely on this matter (of emotions) that the main acting theories are seen as opposed to each other. Remarkably, even amongst the most adept American “involvement” actors, the actors’ emotions hardly relate to the character-emotions.

Task Emotions

In the foregoing results, the actors’ emotions were considered from the viewpoint of traditional acting theories, which only take the prototypical emotions into consideration. From the viewpoint of the task-emotion theory, one would *not* expect actors to experience the character-emotions they portray, but rather would expect them to experience task-emotions. In particular the majority of the actors reported the emotions in the lower part of Figure 6.5a and 6.5b in high intensities. Emotions

a EMOTIONS DURING STAGE ACTING in NL



b EMOTIONS DURING STAGE ACTING in US

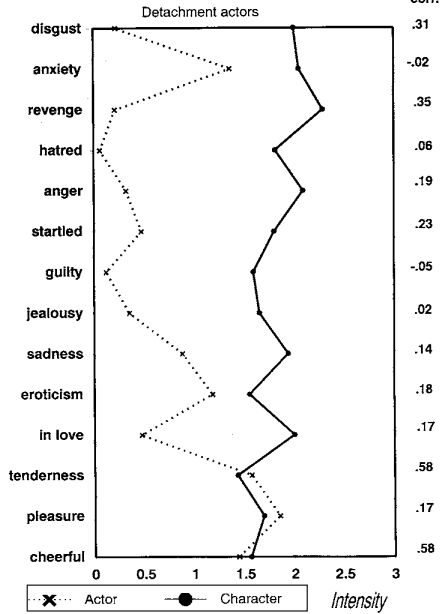
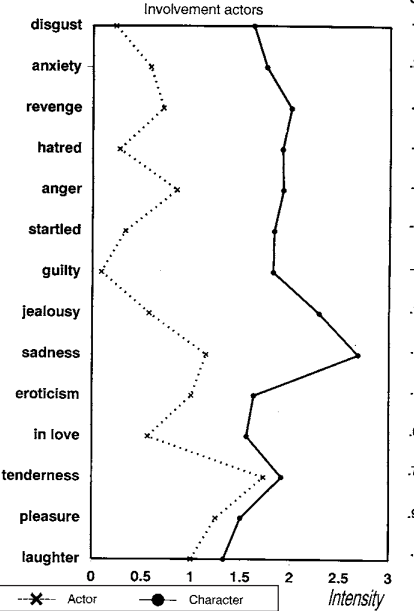


Fig. 6.3a Emotions during stage acting in Netherlands: detachment actors.

Fig. 6.3b Emotions during stage acting in U.S.: detachment actors.

a EMOTIONS DURING STAGE ACTING in NL



b EMOTIONS DURING STAGE ACTING in US

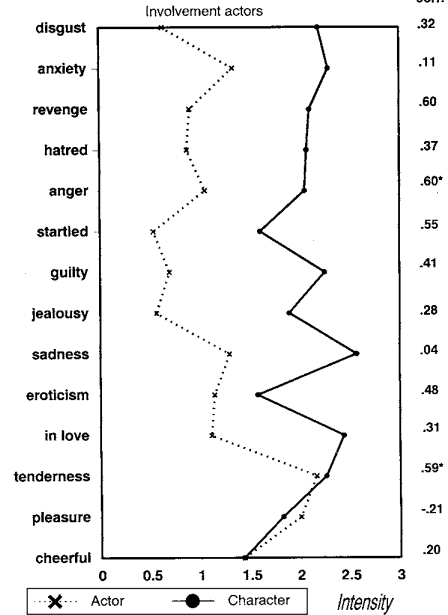


Fig. 6.4a Emotions during stage acting in Netherlands: involvement actors.

Fig. 6.4b Emotions during stage acting in U.S.: involvement actors.

in the lower part are generally felt as positive ones and those in the upper part of the figure are negative ones. The actors hardly reported the latter for themselves. Although the mean intensities almost converged for some emotions, there were no significant correlations between the emotions of actors and their character-emotions.

Contrary to expectations, the characters were also attributed positive and negative “task-emotions,” presumably because characters also attempt to achieve their goals. In order to resolve the (dramatic) conflicts and to overcome hurdles to reach desired results, characters – like actors – must also accomplish numerous tasks, which may lead actors to attribute task-emotions to their characters. However, again, it cannot be concluded that there is any similarity between actor and character because the actors experienced, as predicted, mainly the positive task-emotions intensely (concentration, challenge, strength, certainty) which were not related to those portrayed in the character.

Actors’ Emotions Before and During Performance

As a further test of the idea that the emotions actors experience during performances mainly relates to accomplishing acting tasks, the actors’ emotions just before the performance started were compared to the emotions experienced during the performance. The significant, but moderate correlations between the positive task-emotions before and during the performance suggest that the emotions during a live stage performance compare to the emotions the actors experience just before

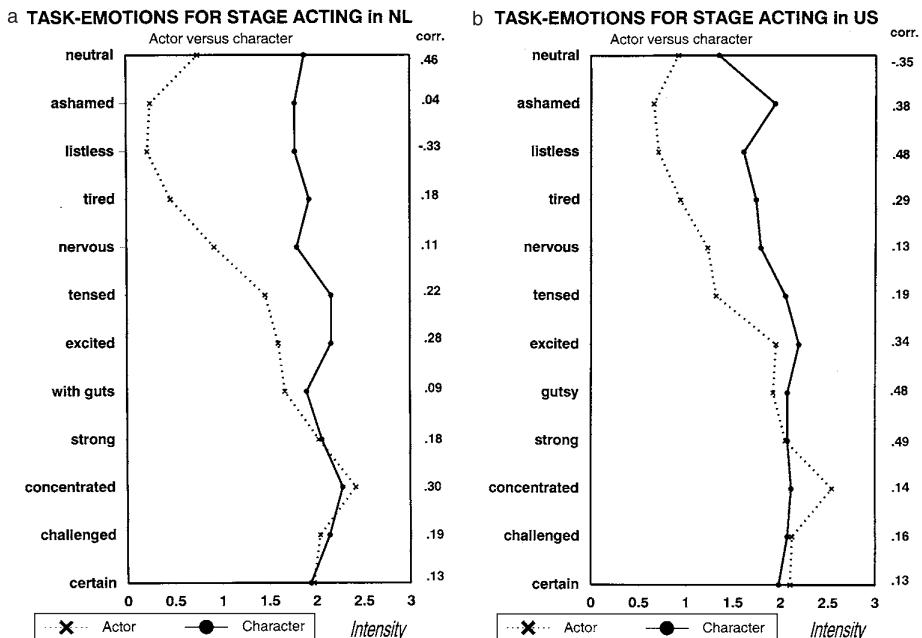


Fig. 6.5a Task-emotions for stage acting in Netherlands: actor versus character.

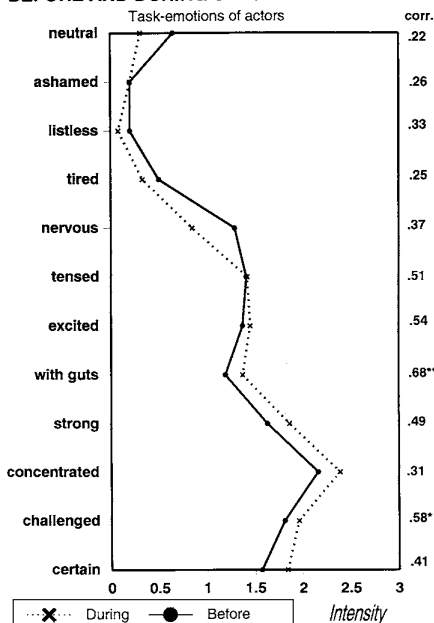
Fig. 6.5b Task-emotions for stage acting in U.S.: actor versus character.

the performance starts. In general, there is a somewhat stronger relationship between the positive emotions actors experienced before and during the performance than between the portrayed character-emotions and the emotions of the actors themselves (Figure 6.6a and 6.6b).

Some emotion words were not categorized as task-emotions in theory, because they belong to the category of the prototypical emotions (such as tenderness, pleasure, and cheerfulness). For these emotions, however, significant and relatively strong relationships between the actors' experiences just before the performance and those during the performance were observed (Figure 6.7a and 6.7b). This finding further supports the task-emotion theory. Apparently, the actors' emotional experiences during the performance were already present just before the performance (and to similar degrees as shown by the mean intensities). Even when the actor did experience so-called prototypical emotions, these generally did not relate to the character-emotions. The emotional experiences of actors during a performance can therefore be interpreted as (mainly) related to the *acting tasks*, even when prototypical emotions are involved.

Moreover, the emotional experiences during stage acting relate strongly to the emotional experiences the actors report themselves to have felt just before the performance started, represented in Figure 6.6. Therefore, it supports the notion of task-emotions, even more because they are *unrelated* to the character-emotions. As far as emotions of the actor are concerned which were not classified as task-emotions in the figure, like tenderness, pleasure and laughter in Figure 6.1, they are

a BEFORE AND DURING STAGE ACTING in NL



b BEFORE AND DURING STAGE ACTING in US

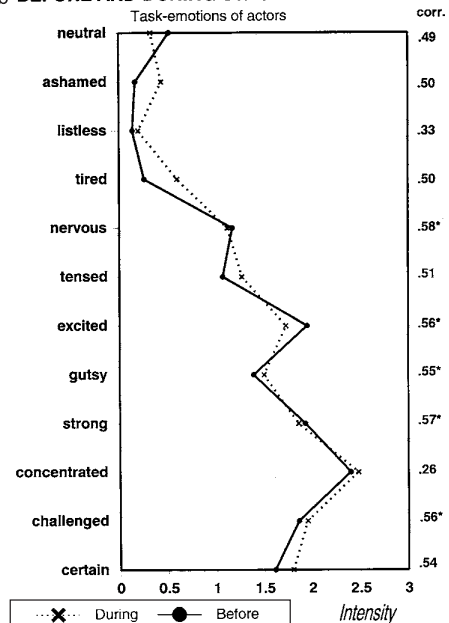


Fig. 6.6a Before and during stage acting in Netherlands: task-emotions of actors.

Fig. 6.6b Before and during stage acting in U.S.: task-emotions of actors.

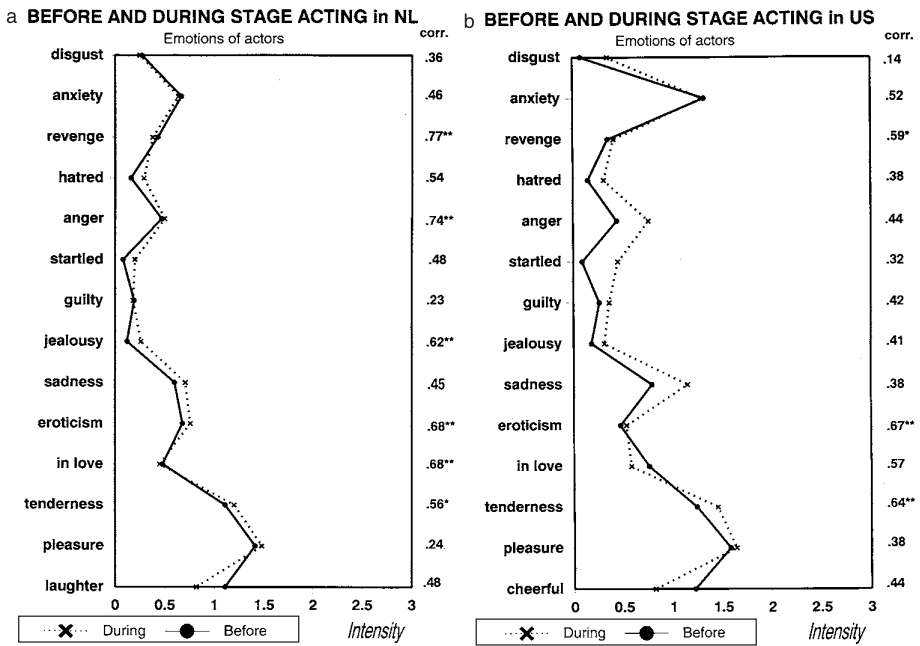


Fig. 6.7a Before and during stage acting in Netherlands: emotions of actors.

Fig. 6.7b Before and during stage acting in U.S.: emotions of actors.

also strongly related to the emotional experiences of the actors just before the performance began, shown in Figure 6.7. Thus, it supports the view that the emotions of the actor are related to his task-performance and not to the performed character-emotions. Even when the actor experiences so called prototypical emotions, they are not related to the performed character. Therefore, these experiences of actors can also be interpreted as task-emotions, although they occur only in a minority.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter professional acting of emotions on stage is analysed from a psychological perspective, theoretically and empirically. After integrating current acting theories with contemporary emotion psychology, three competing hypotheses were formulated. These concerned the actors' emotions on stage compared to their characters' represented emotions. Either they should feel the same as their characters (involvement), or actors do not experience any emotions at all (detachment), or actors do not have the character-emotions, but rather experience task-emotions (task-emotion theory). The hypotheses were tested with the help of professional actors in Europe and the United States (in separate studies) by means of an extended questionnaire. The results of the studies are reported in Konijn (1994; 2000) and briefly presented in this chapter.

The statistical analyses of the questionnaire data point out that the actors themselves hardly experienced the emotions they represented as characters, irrespective

of the emotion portrayed. The involvement hypothesis is therefore not supported by the results. However, the detachment hypothesis is not supported either. Rather, the actors experienced a particular array of emotions which were not related to the character-emotions. These emotions of the actors performing on stage were interpreted to be task-emotions, thus providing support for the task-emotion theory. The task-emotions are related to specific concerns and relevant components in the performance situation of an actor fulfilling his profession.

The theoretical contradiction between different approaches to acting emotions onstage is not found in the empirical data from the samples of professional actors. Detachment and involvement are not mutually exclusive, as the theories propose; rather it appears that aspects of both styles are used simultaneously in the actors' theatre practice (also empirically supported in Konijn 1994; 2000). All in all, the results of the European (Dutch and Flemish) and the American actors were remarkably comparable. Even the firmest adherents to method acting from the US did not show significant correspondence between the emotion they portrayed as characters and their own affective states. This indicates that while becoming involved in their character, the actors' emotional experiences do not run in parallel with their character.

Thus, regardless of the acting style, the emotions onstage are illusions as far as character-emotions are concerned: they are not reflected in the emotional experiences of the actors. But the emotions on stage are no illusions as far as the underlying, genuine emotions of the actors are concerned. The actors' emotions while acting can now be interpreted as resulting from the demands of task accomplishment and the situation of performing on stage. The professional actors reported to experience intense task-emotions of a positive nature, like excitement, concentration, and challenge, notwithstanding the sad, frightening or tragic fate of their tormented dramatic characters.

Additional evidence in support of the task-emotion theory can be derived from Boiten (1996), Futterman et al. (1992), Weisweiler (1983) and Konijn (1991). Boiten found that the facial expressions most difficult to produce (anger, fear, and sadness) showed larger cardiac accelerations and more pronounced respiratory effects than those that were easy to produce (disgust and surprise); the happiness expression fell somewhere in between. When comparing the heart rates of adults who reported to actually feel the emotion with those who did not, no differences were found. The found differences in physiological changes are explained by the differences in effort of producing emotional expressions related to the difficulty of the specific emotion (Boiten, 1996). In Futterman et al. (1992; also in Moyers, 1994) exactly the same patterns of increase of physiological parameters in the immune system during the happy and sad states of their professional actors were found. I interpret their results as a consequence of experiencing similar task-emotions in both states while trying to meet the task demands of "reliving an emotional experience." Professional actors apparently distinguish between their emotional *expressions* and their emotional *experiences*. Weisweiler (1983) and Konijn (1991) found that the heart rate levels of actors during performances were significantly higher than during rehearsals of the same performance. The differences in the physiological stress indicators were, however, not related to specific expressions of character-emotions, but rather to going on and off stage, reaching the highest levels during monologues (even up to 180 beats per minute). Thus, the task at hand determined whether heart rate increased.

During rehearsals, however, it can be helpful to invoke private emotions (as separated from task-emotions) in order to become acquainted with the desired character-emotions. In studying the acting process, rehearsals need to be distinguished from live performances. (Likewise, professional actors and amateur actors should be distinguished in the analysis of acting.) Common acting theories usually do not make a clear distinction between rehearsal and performance. Usually, they describe a rehearsal method to reach an accurate portrayal. These methods barely touch on acting in performance. By looking for similarities between him/herself and the character, an actor can gain insight into real life emotions which may help him/her create an inner model of the intended character-emotions. During a *performance*, however, the demands of the actual context of acting – in front of an audience – will prevent the actor from losing himself in character-emotions.

By distinguishing rehearsals from performances, the four levels of enactment (plus their emotional layers), and the four aspects of acting styles (instead of acting styles), four task demands can be described in relation to each other as a model of the acting process.

The first and second level in the task-based model of the acting process (scheme 3) mainly pertain to the rehearsal process, whereas the third and fourth level are emphasized during the public performances. Actually, while going through the four phases of the acting process, starting at the lowest level (1), one comes closer to the actual performance. Note that the model focuses on acting emotions, but might be appropriate for other aspects as well.

On the first level of enactment the actor acts as a private person and uses his private emotions, e.g. via emotional memory. He can try to let himself be carried away by involvement in character-emotions. By doing so he can revive knowledge about emotions from daily life, which is a necessary requirement to perform the first task demand of acting: to build a model of the intended character (including its emotions) in the imagination of the actor. On the basis of the revived (emotional) knowledge, s/he may decide to let the character resemble a well-known person, a mixture of several daily life persons, or just to make it a caricature, an abstract image, or only the choreographed movements.

Once the inner model is set, however vaguely, the level of the inner model can be reached to further develop. At this second level of enactment, the actor can use any resemblance (coincidental or intentional) between him/herself and the character, a second aspect of acting styles. Particularly in traditional character-acting resemblance to daily life emotions is demanded in which realistic features of the actor might be supportive for the suitability of his expressive instrument. In general, specifically at this stage, the actor's expressive instrument must be flexible in order to be able to portray believable and convincing emotional expressions suited to the inner model – a second acting task. Even if a non-realistic or abstract portrayal of a character or emotional expression is sought for, it is an actor's task to impress the audience with a convincing expression.

On the third level of enactment, the actor acts on stage as the portrayed character, representing the character-emotions. Technical design and control is then important to arrive at an automatic execution of character behaviour, such that the actor keeps attention capacity for all task-demands and unexpected occurrences. When the actor achieves a more or less fixed form of the character, its presentation

Scheme 3: A task-based model of the acting process.

levels of enactment	acting style aspects		task demands for executing acting tasks		acting tasks
(1) private person	→	carried away by character-emotions	→	knowledge of everyday emotions	→ creating a model of the intended character-emotions in the imagination
(2) inner model	→	resemblance between actor and character	→	suitability and flexibility of the expressive instrument	→ portray believable and convincing emotional expressions
(3) character portrayal	→	technical design	→	making character-behaviour automatic	→ repeat a more or less fixed form
(4) actor-craftsman	→	applying task-emotions	→	achieving presence	→ creating the illusion of spontaneity

The levels are interrelated and ordered hierarchically. The first level (1) is the most basic and this forms the basis for building the higher levels. Completing acting tasks and the skills demanded on the fourth level (4) depends on completing the tasks and skills on the previous levels. Feedback on every level influences adjustments on other levels. During a performance audiences will perceive the different levels of the acting process as an integrated whole, while the actor is more or less conscious of operating on four levels simultaneously.

can be more or less stable to be repeated throughout a series of performances. This is the third acting task, again holding for different kinds of performances. Even if a rather improvisational performance is strived after, the framework within which the dramatic events and acts occur is usually set.

The various approaches to acting differ most evidently in the way the actor should reach an optimal performance in the formulation of the fourth acting task and accompanying task demands: how to create the illusion of spontaneity and achieve a quality of presence. According to the involvement style of acting (1), the actor creates a “spontaneous look” of character-emotions by invoking his own private emotions, such that they resemble those of the character-emotions to be portrayed. According to the detachment style of acting (2), a convincing portrayal of character-emotions requires that the concerns, goals, and motives of the character are made clear to the audience, as well as the demands that the dramatic context makes on the character. Then the illusion of spontaneity is achieved through the technical design of the character’s behaviour. The acting style of self-expression (3) seeks the illusion of spontaneity in achieving presence by presenting the authentic “real life” experiences of the actors themselves. Thus, the actor adapts the character to assist the expression of the actor’s own “inner self.” According to the task-emotion theory (4), the actor shapes (or regulates) his/her task-emotions, including related action tendencies. These real and genuine emotions of the actor onstage provide the character-emotions with an illusion of spontaneity. As explained above, spectators will interpret the perceived emotional cues within the dramatic circumstances of the play. The perceived sense of sincerity of the emotional expressions is fed by the radiation of underlying real task-emotions, which also may be interpreted as the actor having stage presence.

To develop an acting theory and actor training that fits theatrical developments in the 21st Century, it is vital to demystify acting; I attempted to establish a point of departure for such a project. Although the task-emotion theory is limited to acting *emotions* on stage, the theory is, in principle, also valid for disciplines where no emotions are portrayed. Already acting styles and theatrical expressions have developed in the West in which the representation of real (realistic) characters and real (realistic) character-emotions have decreased in importance, whereas appropriate theoretical renewal and actor training lags far behind. Intercultural theatre and occidental influences are gaining increasing importance and becoming more integrated in contemporary performances (e.g., Zarrilli, Barba, Lendra, Suzuki, Foley, this volume). Some ensembles present the actors themselves as “real people” on stage, whereas others use non-representational acting strategies or strongly choreographed “abstract acting,” acting within a computer animated environment, and theatre shows presenting mixed art forms are no exception on modern stages. They all set different emphases within the acting tasks and make different demands on the actors, particularly differing from traditional character acting. The time has come to develop a theatre-training program that is useful to actors who will perform their profession on modern stages in such a diversity of artistic styles. I hope that a task-based acting theory might be helpful to provide a basis for a general training of performing onstage in the 21st Century.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Part II

(RE)CONSIDERING THE BODY AND TRAINING

7

INTRODUCTION

Phillip B. Zarrilli

Although the actor's body has always been "there" as the actor's sole means of expression in live performance, the degree to which the body and/or a self-consciously constructed system of training toward performance is foregrounded, is variable since both are culturally, socio-economically, and historically specific. In the popular/public *commedia dell'arte* and Elizabethan theatres, actors did not "train" for the stage in the way that we "train" actors today. How the actors prepared to perform was less important than that they perform well. Similarly, many of today's stand-up comics get their "training" on the job.

Most self-conscious systems of preparation or training have evolved under some form of patronage which frees the actor from the necessity of responding to changeable popular tastes to concentrate on developing a particular body for a particular craft and style of acting – usually a craft and style which brings pleasure, merit, and/or respect to its wealthy and/or politically powerful patrons. For example, the Japanese *nō*, Indian Sanskrit drama, and Western opera were traditions of performance which required specialized training and "bodies" which flourished only after gaining court patronage.

Each culture's understanding of acting as a form of embodiment is based on indigenous paradigms of the body (including voicing), the body-mind relationship, and consciousness or awareness. For example, to understand traditional modes of acting in China, Japan, or Korea, one would have to understand Chinese medicine (or its variations), and crucially the concept/principle of *qi* (Japanese and Korean *ki*), among others. As Chinese performers describe it, a good actor must "radiate presence" (*faqì*), while a poor performer would have no presence (*meiyóu qì*) (Riley 1997: 206). These usually unarticulated assumptions about how a performer psychophysically activates such "presence" inform and animate the process of acting both in training and onstage.

To understand acting in India, one would need to understand vibratory theories of sound which provide insight into the psychophysical aspects of voicing and its metaphysical implications; yoga physiology/philosophy which provide a detailed understanding of what happens to both physical and "subtle" bodies when

practicing exercises; and Ayurveda (literally, the “science of life”), the indigenous system of medicine which provides a humoural understanding of the body, physiology, and health. Central to all three paradigms is an Indian understanding of the key roles that the internal wind humour (*prana vayu*) and awakening of one’s inner energy (*kundalini sakti*) to travel along the spine line play in animating exercise and voicing (see Zimmermann 1983; Zarrilli 1989a; Zarrilli 2000b: 123ff).

Unlike early Western theories of acting such as Aristotle’s *Poetics* which is primarily concerned with theories of *mimesis* and representation, and therefore pays no attention to issues of embodiment, training, or technique, many non-western theories of acting place embodiment and awareness at the centre of their description or examination of acting techniques and process, even if the psychophysical assumptions noted above often remain unarticulated. India’s *Nāṭyaśāstra* (perhaps c.200BC to AD200) is an encyclopedic work on all aspects of drama attributed to the sage Bharata, but probably is a synthesis of collective knowledge of production practices current at the time. Its 36 chapters classify and describe in minute detail every aspect of production necessary for an acting company to achieve success when performing then-popular Sanskrit dramas at courts. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* describes how actors should follow a rigorous training regime including a special diet, seasonal full-body massage, and training in physical exercises, dance postures, and rhythm in order to embody each role mentally and physically, thereby “carrying forward” (*abhinaya*) each state of being/doing (*bhava*) for the audience to taste and savor (*rasa*). As summarized in Nandikesvara’s late Sanskrit text, the *Abhinaya-darpanam* (c.10th–13th century), the virtuosic actor-dancer should achieve an ideal, non-conditional state of accomplishment in which

Where the hand [is], there [is] the eye;
 where the eye [is], there [is] the mind;
 where the mind [is], there [is] the *bhava* (actor’s state of being/doing);
 where the *bhava* is, there is the *rasa* (audience’s savoring).

The South Asian processes and cultural assumptions discussed above are assumed in the lengthy intensive training of Kerala’s *kathakali* actor-dancers (Zarrilli 2000a, 1984a) so influential in inspiring Grotowski’s early theatre work and the development of his understanding of a psychophysical process of acting.

In the Japanese *nō* theatre, there is no specific separate method of training toward performance; rather, as the student “trains” toward performance (Bethe and Brazell 1982–3, 1990) he learns what Richard Schechner calls the “whole performance sequence” to be performed onstage (1985). Zeami Motokiyo, the founder with his father Kan-ami of Japanese *nō* theatre, wrote a series of twenty or more early fifteenth-century treatises which collectively constitute the first sole-authored general theory of acting (see Zeami 1975, 1984; Nearman 1978, 1980, 1982–3). These writings provide practical advice on teaching acting, how to play specific roles, convey an understanding of the subtleties of the psychophysical process of acting focusing in part on the performer’s energy and modes of vocalization, analyze how to capture the audience’s attention, and articulate the way (*michi*) of *nō* as a Buddhist path toward enlightenment. In his earliest text, *Kadensho* (*Teachings on Style and the Flower*) written at the age of 40, Zeami first elaborated one of the primary metaphors and principles of acting informing all his texts – the flower (*hana*): “First, look at the flowers in nature and through them understand why we

adopt the figure of the flower through all phases of the *nō* play” (Zeami 1975: 87). Zeami’s texts are both pragmatic, and metaphysical. On the pragmatic side, he advises the actor playing an old man not to be “too self-conscious of his age and walk with a stoop or shrink of his body” since no flower can be found in playing a stereotype (Zeami 1975: 18). Emphasizing the need for novelty in keeping one’s acting fresh and as a means of capturing the audience’s attention, he observes that “there can be no flower which stays forever without decaying. Because the flower decays, it is novel when it blooms again at its own season” (Zeami 1975: 87). Writing at 65 in the *Kyūi*, Zeami described the highest level of acting as bearing none of the usual or visible outward signs of accomplishment. Here the actor achieves the “Mark of the Miraculous Flower” which transcends dualities and whose mark is “no-Mark” – the permanent flower is a metaphysical principle in the actor’s bodymind (Nearman’s translation, 1978: 329).

Although Western theories of acting do not usually articulate an explicit set of assumptions about the body-mind relationship, there are nevertheless key assumptions about the body-mind always in operation. For example, as theatre historian Joseph Roach explains, the eighteenth century *castrati* performers gave their bodies over to a transformative regime of the body for performance (Roach 1989). All modes of disciplining or cultivating the body exemplify how “power touches people’s lives through social and cultural practices more than through centralized state organizations or systems of belief. Power is diffused at the ‘capillary’ level in the micropolitics of daily life” (Roach 1989: 101).¹

Our contemporary Euro-American notions of training are peculiar to the development of new forms of drama/performance (including film/television), the modern repertory stage, the avant-garde and experimental theatre, as well as to institutional training within the college and university setting where students, often under the patronage of the state and/or parents, are “free” to pursue training in the arts. As is clear from this list, it is impossible to speak of actor training as if it were *one* thing, separate from the particular context within which training takes place, and without reference to the type of performance toward which one is preparing.

As all the above examples illustrate, “there is no such thing as *the* human body, there are many kinds of body, which are fashioned by the different environments and expectations that societies have of their members’ bodies” (Blacking 1985: 66). Particular modes of training and particular genres of performance demand specific bodies fashioned in a particular environment for a particular set of performative expectations. Therefore, acting, like any other technique of disciplining the body such as aerobics, weight training, contact improvisation, military drills, etc. might be considered “technologies” of the body in Foucault’s sense, that is, practices through which “humans develop knowledge about themselves” (Foucault 1988: 18). As cultural theorist Richard Johnson asserts, “subjectivities are produced, not given, and are the objects of inquiry, not the premises or starting points” (1986: 44).² The techniques which constitute a particular technology of the body cannot be divorced from the discourses and assumptions which inform how that set of techniques is understood and/or represented. For example, for a devoutly Buddhist Japanese *nō* actor, the subjectivity produced through his practice and experience of *nō* acting assimilated through the tenets of Buddhist religio-philosophical thought, may lead toward aesthetic and personal enlightenment of the sort that Zeami

discussed as the ultimate flowering of one's life-in-art; what Nearman calls a "psycho-spiritual process" (1982–3).

HISTORICAL (RE)CONSIDERATIONS OF TRAINING AND EXERCISES

There is no better introduction to the (re)considerations of the body and training that follow in Part II than Eugenio Barba's concise and poetic account (Chapter 8) of the role that exercises have played in the development of 20th century actor training. After his apprenticeship with Jerzy Grotowski during the early theatrical phase of Grotowski's work in Poland, Barba's life-long work has interwoven three key strands – his ongoing practical theatrical work with his long-standing company, Odin Teatret in Holstebro, Denmark (Andreasen and Kuhlmann 2000; Watson 1993; Barba 1979, 1985a, 1986a, 1999); his international exchanges and "barterers"; and his intercultural explorations of the details of the psychophysical processes of the professional actor (what he calls "theatre anthropology"). Early in his work with the Odin Teatret, Barba inherited from his work with Jerzy Grotowski a search for a foundational psychophysical process for the actor which took account of observations, insights, and techniques from non-Western performance traditions. Eventually Barba abandoned his own quest for a specific psychophysical training technique, leaving it to the Odin Teatret actors with whom he still works, to develop their own process as a state of constant "self-revelation," and thereby to ensure that their techniques would not be the imposition of some external technique (1972). In place of developing a specific training technique, Barba began a long-term collaborative commitment to an exploration of what he calls "Theatre Anthropology" by periodically holding "International School(s) of Theatre Anthropology" (ISTA) at which he gathers an interdisciplinary team of scholars, an intercultural group of professional performers, and a number of observers/participants which varies from school to school. To gain a fuller appreciation of Barba's reflections on the dynamics and principles of the actor's art from an intercultural perspective, the reader should explore Barba and Savarese's *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* (1991), which is simultaneously a document of ISTA's research and workshops up to 1991, and a valuable, if eclectic, resource book for actors, scholars, and practitioners exploring the phenomenon of acting. Here Barba clearly defines his purpose:

Theatre Anthropology is not concerned with those levels of organisation which make possible the application of the paradigms of cultural anthropology to theatre and dance . . . Nor should Theatre Anthropology be confused with the anthropology of performance . . . Theatre Anthropology is the study of the behaviour of the human being when it uses physical and mental presence in an organised performance situation and according to principles which are different from those used in daily life.

(Barba and Savarese 1991: 5)

Collected and arranged alphabetically in the *Dictionary* are those cumulative "bits of good advice" (1991: 8) for the actor's "work on himself" which focus on what Barba describes as the "biological" and "empirical" bases of the actor's creative process – such phenomena and performative circumstances as the actor's "anatomy," "balance," "dilation," "energy," or "rhythm." Barba's focus is on "the principles of this extra-daily use of the body and their application to the actor's and dancer's creative work" (1991: 5). The *Dictionary* is a valuable place to begin to

explore the phenomenon of the creative art of the performer beyond the narrow confines of a Euro-American male point of view. As Watson shows (1993: 41–72), Barba has applied the principles distilled from this research to his own practical work in training and dramaturgy with the Odin Teatret.

Barba's "An Amulet Made of Memory" (Chapter 8) provides an incisive list of ten characteristics shared by systems of training/exercise through which the actor works on oneself. "Good" exercises are not simply a means of toning the physical body, but of creating an entire new awareness of the actor's internal life – not in a psychological or behavioral sense, but as a psychophysiological means of encountering the performative moment in fresh flesh – a bodymind awakened, sensitized, made newly aware or fully concentrated through the feet and/or along the spine. Encountering exercises in ongoing training should be a process of continuous transformation and renewal. Barba's essay could also serve as a fitting conclusion to Part II of this volume; therefore, I would encourage a re-reading of this description of the "work" of exercises in the actor's formation as a fitting summary of the principles and purposes that underlie the various systems of exercise and training, whether Barba's, or that of others (Chapters 9–17).

Mel Gordon's (Chapter 9) historical and contextual discussion of Meyerhold's Biomechanics traces the development of this set of exercises as one part of the actor's training along with other popular early twentieth century training activities including fencing, boxing, Dalcroze eurhythmics, etc. Given the turn of the century predominance of a popular belief in the miracles of modern science and engineering, Gordon's discussion of Taylorism, reflexology, constructivism, and William James' theory of emotion, helps us to understand how any training system is informed by the political, intellectual, scientific, and ideological milieu in which that system of exercises and training develops.³

THE "NEUTRAL" STATE AS A PRIMARY METAPHOR

If scientific and mechanistic metaphors were dominant in the development of Meyerhold's vision of training and performance, the essays by Sklar (Chapter 10), Eldredge and Huston (Chapter 11), and Zarrilli (Chapter 15) focus on various strands of an alternative primary metaphor through which methods of actor training developed – training toward a state or condition of "neutrality." As Zarrilli explains at length, Jacques Copeau and his collaborators retired to the countryside in 1913 to develop a system of helping the actor to realize a state of motionlessness or simplicity in silence – what is usually called a "neutral" state today. Eldredge and Huston report how Copeau introduced his students to work with masks, thereby sowing the seeds for Etienne Decroux's development of Corporeal (Promethean) Mime discussed by Sklar, the neutral mask work developed by Jacques Lecoq (2000), and A.C. Scott's use of Asian martial arts in actor training (in Zarrilli, 1993). Although Eldredge and Huston emphasize the paradox and problem with use of "neutral" as a primary metaphor – "the actor cannot be neutral; he can only hope to attain moments of neutral action" – neutral mask work, corporeal mime, and martial arts help the individual to discover what Copeau defined as that moment of motionlessness to and from which the actor moves.

Inspired by Copeau's vision, implicit in the use of the word "neutral" is the notion that the actor in training passes through a process of development and

transformation which is artistic, but can also be interpreted as personal. As Sklar suggests, for Decroux, the personal could also very much be *the political*, that is, social transformation begins with disciplining the self.

The emphasis upon (artistic/personal) transformation often led, as with Copeau and Decroux, to the sequestering of companies, ensembles, and students in countryside retreat centers, restrictive enclaves, or conservatories where “intensive” work could be carried on and whose justification was the activity and process of training *per se*. During the 1960s Jerzy Grotowski combined the notion of training/transformation with the scientific metaphor of the research laboratory when he founded a centre where his ensemble of actors could train as well as conceive and workshop productions relatively unencumbered by the constraints of time. For Grotowski, this quest for transformative exercises, focused at first on developing “psychophysical techniques,” that is, techniques which equally engaged the actor’s mind (psycho) and body (physical) in a “total” intensive engagement in the moment. In Grotowski’s most recent “para-theatrical” work (Lendra, Chapter 12) transformation and work on the self has subsumed the artistic (see also Schechner and Wolford 1997; Richards 1995).

NON-WESTERN AND INTERCULTURAL (RE)CONSIDERATIONS

As already noted, the search for alternative paradigms and techniques of training through which to (re)consider theatrical structure and form, acting, the body, as well as training led many Western practitioners, if not at first to the use of Asian techniques *per se*, at least to an alternative vision prompted by encounters with non-Western, and in particular Asian performance traditions. Yoga and Indian philosophy played an important role in the development of Stanislavsky’s key concepts and approaches to acting – an influence long unrecognized due to Soviet suppression and problems with English translations of Stanislavsky’s major books (Carnicke 1998). Between the 1920s and 1960s Yeats (Quambar 1974), Meyerhold (Braun 1969), Claudel, Artaud (1958), Brecht (1964a), Grotowski (1968), Barba (1972), Brook, Schechner (1985), and Mnouchkine (Williams 1999) among many others were inspired by their encounters with non-Western performance to forge alternative dramatic forms, techniques, and/or discourses of acting.⁴ As James Brandon points out, the early encounters of Brecht and Artaud with Beijing opera and Balinese performance in Europe were fleeting, surface encounters which may have stimulated their own theatre practice and led to the crystallization of some of their concepts, but accomplished little in terms of helping Westerners to understand the complexities of these genres within their cultures of origin (1989: 32–3).⁵ Grotowski, Barba, Brook, and Schechner all traveled extensively throughout Asia, and reformulated their approaches to production and training in part through these intercultural experiences. Most recently a new generation of practitioners and practitioner/scholars have not only visited Asia but also undertaken extensive training in specific performance or performance-related disciplines, gaining accomplishment in techniques and performing (Snow 1986, Brandon 1989, Emigh 1996).

Intercultural interaction has by no means been a one-way street from the West to non-Western cultures. Some of the foremost non-Western dramatists, directors, and actors, such as Wole Soyinka from Nigeria, Tadashi Suzuki from Japan

(Brandon 1978, 1990, Allain 2002), Yoshi Oida from Japan (Oida 1992, 1997), I Wayan Lendra from Indonesia (Chapter 12), and Putu Wijaya from Indonesia (Rafferty 1989), have forged new dramatic forms and modes of performance which meld indigenous cultural concepts and techniques with what they self-consciously borrow from Western mythology, drama, theatrical theory, and/or techniques of performance. At many postwar national actor training schools in Asia, such as the National School of Drama in New Delhi or the Korean National Academy of the Arts in Seoul, Stanislavskian-based acting or Western vocal training (such as Lessac or Linklater) will be taught alongside traditional techniques of body/vocal training, such as Korean *p'ansori* singing. Brecht's theories in particular have helped to vitalize activist theatre throughout the third world (Rotimi 1990). Eugenio Barba describes this interaction in his reflection on "Eurasian Theatre":

In the meeting between East and West, seduction, imitation and exchange are reciprocal. We have often envied the Orientals their theatrical knowledge, which transmits the actor's living work of art from one generation to another; they have envied our theatre its capacity for confronting new themes, the way in which it keeps up with the times and its flexibility that allows for personal interpretations of traditional texts which often have the energy of a formal and ideological conquest.

(Barba 1990: 32)

Experiencing an-"other" can lead to a profound (re)consideration of one's own paradigms and models of drama as well as performance practice; however, as Edward Said (1978) has shown, it can also lead to an equally profound and disturbing form of colonial appropriation of techniques and/or misrepresentation of another culture. Although intercultural interaction is an inevitable part of what Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge identify as the "transnational flows of global culture" in which theatre participates today (1988), the nature, terms, and practice of intercultural interaction are open to debate.⁶ Critic Daryl Chin expresses the double-edged prospect and problem:

Interculturalism is one of the ways of bringing previously suppressed material into the artistic arena, by admitting into a general discourse other cultures, cultures which had previously been ignored or suppressed or unknown. But the general discourse (which we must define in terms of the dominant culture) must not deform other cultures by making them speak in the language of the dominant culture.

(Chin 1991: 95)

For practitioners who would work with specific techniques from another culture, James Brandon pointedly states the case, "The problem is having superficial knowledge and applying Western standards to everything" (1989: 37). In this post-colonial era, "artistic freedom" can no longer be used as a naive narrative which "frees" the artist from responsibility, but neither can nor should exclusivity and/or censorship be willy-nilly employed on any kind or type of exchange.

Actor trainer Robert Benedetti's 1973 essay reflects the historical moment when images of non-Western, and especially Asian performance were becoming primary visions through which the state or condition of the performer was being re-defined. Although Benedetti never trained in a non-Western performance tradition, like both Brecht and Artaud he nevertheless saw in a demonstration performance by

Chinese actors a vision of embodiment and of the “total” actor which he read as displaying the actor’s “dynamic essence” – a moment of “stillness at the center” which he interprets as arising from the actor’s total engagement in the moment (1973: 464). As Benedetti expresses it, this is a vision of the “whole performer” and not one who “artificially separate[s] skills of voice, body, and mind” (ibid). For Benedetti, Brecht, Barba,⁷ A.C. Scott (Chapter 15), and many others the Asian performer *per se* has become a metaphor of the type of performance practice they wish their own actors to actualize in the performative moment.⁸

Chapter 12 focuses on the one part of the work of one of the most important figures to have used techniques and principles distilled from non-Western cultures in their work with actors – Jerzy Grotowski. Jerzy Grotowski’s theatrical and para-theatrical work has been widely documented (Grotowski 1968; *TDR* 1991, 35, 1, *passim*; Schechner and Wolford 1997). In the particular exploration of Grotowski’s intercultural paratheatrical “Objective Drama” project, undertaken at the University of California at Irvine, which is included here, Balinese performer I Wayan Lendra discusses his own perception of the parallels he experienced between Grotowski’s project and his own training and experience of Balinese performance. Lendra is among a new generation of accomplished performers trained in an indigenous tradition of performance who has chosen to come to the West to pursue an academic degree, and who has also chosen actively to explore the process of performance between cultures. Lendra traces the similarities in the state of being between his own experience of Balinese performance and Grotowski’s project – a state he describes as one of total “alertness.” In his work with Grotowski this state is realized through a set of exercises known as “the Motions,” which Lendra demonstrates. Lendra constructs his description and observations between his experience of Balinese performance in a traditional ritual/religious context, and the experience of commitment and “hard work” required of participants in Grotowski’s work.

Grotowski’s work in “Objective Drama,” like his earlier paratheatrical projects, has moved completely away from any concern with performance as a fiction, to a (hypothetically) irreducible and nonrepresentational mode of experience. Grotowski’s use of “objective” suggests the search for an absolute state beyond the Western dualistic separation of the fictive from the real – a movement from theatre to ritual/transformational process where he locates a “real” beyond the representational.⁹

If Grotowski and Barba alike eventually turned away from developing a specific discipline of training, internationally known contemporary Japanese director and actor trainer Tadashi Suzuki has developed a strict discipline practiced not only by his own company (Suzuki Company at Toga, SCOT) in a rural Japanese village but also by a number of actor training programs in the West. In his essay, “Culture is the Body” (Chapter 13), Suzuki reflects upon the purpose, practice, and philosophy behind his method of training which emphasizes the actor’s relationship to the ground through his feet – a subject which he explores in more depth in his book-length set of essays (1986; see also Paul Allain 2002). Suzuki calls his method a “grammar of the feet” since “consciousness of the body’s communication with the ground leads to a greater awareness of all the physical junctions of the body.” James Brandon explains how in Suzuki’s rigorous training disciplines (*kunren*)

actors are pushed to the ultimate in the interests of *dépaysement*: holding excruciating physical positions, they sing unrelated songs. The actor is therefore forced into a powerful and deep self-encounter from which will come the ability to act the self, whatever the character. The disciplines themselves are derived mostly from *kabuki* and *nō* acting. Powerful stamping, forceful and rhythmic gestures, total concentration of energy in the pelvis (*koshi*), and a complete physicalization of acting are the major aims of training, and these concepts and specific physical postures and movements derive either directly, or indirectly, from Japanese traditional theatre forms.

(Brandon 1990: 92; see also 1978)

Suzuki explained to Brandon the type of engagement he expects of the actor while doing the exercises:

Any time an actor thinks he is merely exercising or training his muscles, he is cheating himself. These are *acting* disciplines. Every instant of every discipline, the actor must be expressing the emotion of some situation, according to his own bodily interpretation. That's why I don't call them exercises (*undo*) or physical fitness teachers don't go on the stage. We do.

(Brandon 1978: 36)

For Suzuki's actors, training exists to "make the whole body *speak*, even when one keeps silent." For Suzuki "the body" becomes the primary metaphor for the optimal state of the actor in performance. For Suzuki "Culture *is* the body."

THE CULTURE OF THE BODY

In many non-Western cultures the body served as a vehicle for cultivating extra-ordinary religio-philosophical sensibilities whether through meditational, martial, ritual, or performance disciplines (Yuasa 1987). Consequently, traditional mythologies of the body adopted by Asian practitioners do not simply assume a "physical" body which is separate from the mental, emotional, cosmological, and philosophical modes of existence, but rather a "body" which instantiates all of the above. As East Asian scholar A.C. Scott explains:

the body of the Asian actor is creative in the manner of a musical instrument and where the actor in the West uses his body to represent reality, the Asian actor's body becomes reality . . . Only by conditioning the body in this way can it become a medium of response to every nuance of suggestion enabling the actor to immerse himself within the cosmic force which in Asian thinking defines the inner reality.

(Scott 1975a: 211)

The essays of Lendra, Suzuki, Foley, and Zarrilli (also Chapter 23 about Rosenthal) implicitly or explicitly assume this notion of the body as a medium through which the actor develops a hyperawareness and sensibility which is a *total* psychophysiological engagement of the bodymind/spirit in the activity. Kathy Foley's account of the performer's body and training in West Java (Chapter 14) makes explicit what is usually implicit for the West Javanese performer – the cosmological assumptions which inform the experience of the performer's body.

Kathy Foley is one among the recent generation of Euro-American practitioner/scholars to have immersed herself in training and performance in a non-Western culture. A gifted performer of Sundanese *wayang golek* (rod puppet theatre),

Foley's essay is written between her own experience of practice in West Java, her position as teacher of acting in the United States, and her scholarly interest in a careful articulation of indigenous concepts of the body in performance. In terms similar to those used by Lendra to describe his experience in Bali, Foley relates how the Sundanese performer comes to "embody the whole cosmos." In describing the West Javanese performer's journey through training, Foley relates how training first "... creates distance between the performer and what is performed. Moving away from real life is the first step of training ..." Foley astutely points out how different this is from American method-based actor training:

The *topeng* and *wayang* theatre radically separates the performer (power) and the performed character (individual manifestation of power). That is why the training moves first away from the performer's personality only to reintegrate it later in the new system developed through continuous practice. It is interesting to note that the American actor trained in the Stanislavsky system usually begins by drawing closer to the self; early acting assignments are often characters close to the performer in age and type, certainly in gender, race, and species.

In West Java training begins with the "refined character whose slow, measured movement and melodious, centered voice are considered furthest from the ordinary self," but moves the performer through "multiple personae" each with its own quite different use of voice, energy, and space so that ultimately the actor inhabits "different 'bodies.'" Ultimately the performer is capable of playing a "repertory of beings ... that are emotionally different aspects of one's soul, the social order, the life cycle."

The final intercultural (re)consideration of the body and training is my own account (Chapter 15) of training performers through Asian martial/meditation arts. A.C. Scott's early use of Asian martial arts in training actors in the Asian/Experimental Theatre Program of the University of Wisconsin-Madison from 1963 results from his desire to actualize the vision of both Copeau and St Denis of the actor achieving a state of "expressive stillness which contains the embryo of the action to follow" (1993: 56). Scott began to use the Chinese martial art, *taijiquan*, to train American actors.¹⁰ Scott became interested in learning *taijiquan* after witnessing performances by the best Chinese actors, including Mei Lan Fang:

The sheer physical command, vibrant presence, yet consummate restraint of the Chinese actor or actress seemed to lay bare the very essence of the theatrical process and compelled consideration of the art of acting in a new light.

Interest in Chinese acting led naturally to a deeper exploration of training methods and principles. From there it was a short step to learning *t'ai chi ch'uan*, both as a personal discipline and an essential guide to understanding some basic working principles of activities which have had an immense influence on stage techniques.

(Scott 1993: 51)

Scott eventually began to use *taijiquan* in training American actors when faced with students "whose bad habits on the stage were reinforced by their confusion in perceiving that acting is not simply the duplication of life" (1993: 52). "On the edge of a breath, looking ..." (Chapter 15) outlines a way of training through the Asian martial/meditation arts, as well as a psychophysiological paradigm of the

bodymind relationship and acting which draws upon the underlying principles and metaphors of the (Asian) bodies-in-practice, as well as the ideas of Copeau and Artaud.

BEYOND THE “NEUTRAL”: THE INNER (PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGICAL) DYNAMISM OF CHARACTERIZATION AND ACTING

For those making use of the primary metaphor of the beginning state of the actor as “neutral,” there is always the problem that students will misinterpret “neutral” to mean a state of relaxation rather than a state of dynamic readiness, that is, students may miss the *something more* that lies behind the apparent surface “neutrality” of a state of motionlessness – it is the “flame” that is “underneath the stewpot.”¹¹ Throughout these essays are references to this “flame” burning beneath the surface, that is, to the hyperawareness of the body and its internal “energy” that is sometimes achieved – the internal state of the actor to which Barba refers (Chapter 8). As most teachers of acting know, one cannot light this “flame” in a student – one can only enable a student to discover the flame, and then gain the accomplished ability to modulate its intensity in a manner that is appropriate to particular performative circumstances.

The “flame” as a sign of the actor’s internal modulation of his or her energy in performance is particularly apt for theories and metaphors which focus or elaborate on acting as a psychophysiological process, and particularly the role that the breath/energy/life force plays in creating the dynamism of the performative moment.¹² As I explain in detail in my own essay (Chapter 15), Asian disciplines of practice, including acting, are implicitly understood to be a psychophysiological means to effecting a fundamental transformation of the individual through the repetitious practices of exercises and/or forms (*kata*, Japanese). Mastery of embodied forms, when combined with the ability to fix and focus both the gaze and the mind, frees the practitioner/artist from “consciousness about” for entry into a state of “concentratedness.” Each culture has its own particular version of the psychophysiology of exercise; what is shared is a common concern with cultivation through the body.

Such concerns are at the heart of traditional Asian systems of health and medicine, and therefore the psychophysiological dynamics of any disciplined use of the body implicitly assumed a special relationship between breath, energy, and the body in space and time. As I explain at length in Chapter 15, as the actor gradually cultivates the skills of modulation of the breath and internal energy, this ability is applied in the literally nuanced manipulation and use of one’s body in performance to express a character’s emotional states or conditions within the context of the drama (see also Barba’s discussion of emotion in Chapter 8).

The essays by Barba, Lendra, Foley, Suzuki, and myself reflect non-Western assumptions about the material, psychophysiological basis of acting as a dynamic, “vibratory” process. Foley reports that Sundanese training prompts “a change of consciousness . . . activated by hyperstimulation of the nervous system.” It is an exercise of “changeability.” Similarly, Lendra explains how the exercises he has practiced “help the body to generate innate physical power” through which he becomes hyperaware of his body, that is, “it absorbs what I see and hear. The surroundings become one with my body, and I feel as if my body is hollow and is

being lifted. The more I see and hear, the more I sense my body.” Lendra found that such hyperawareness was generated especially when performing “the Motions” through which he would “feel the vibration of my energy through my body and I feel the pulses of my heart in my feet.” From this psychophysiological perspective, characterization and the expression of the dramatic states or conditions within which a character “lives” onstage are accomplished not through a psychological understanding of motivations, but through the dynamic psychophysiological process.

Regarding Suzuki’s exercise, James Brandon observed how he noticed a “sense of great tension” in their performance, to which Suzuki responded:

Suppression is fundamental to traditional Japanese theatre. What do I mean? Expression in Japanese theatre isn’t natural or real. There is nothing natural about a *mie* or the leaping *roppo* exit in *kabuki*. They are extremely unnatural. So there is this almost unbearable tension in the actor, because he is using unnatural movements and voice to express natural emotions . . . The secret of this kind of acting is instantaneous release of suppressed action, then suppression (that is, nonaction), release again, and so on . . . I suppose you call it tension, but it is not muscular tension. It is psychological tension.

(1978: 40)

Therefore, Suzuki’s training develops “concentration of the body through controlling the breathing.” Similarly, as I explain, training in traditional Asian martial arts develops the practitioner’s intuitive ability to control the circulation of the breath/energy through the entire body.

Although the religious/cosmological dimensions of this “total” process of engagement are specific to non-Western traditions, a psychophysiological based understanding of the actor’s internal process has not been the sole province of the Asian actor. As E.T. Kirby suggests, melodramatic acting, and Delsarte’s codified system were developed to allow maximal affect through the complete training of the actor’s body precisely in order to allow him to display the effects of the virtuosic ability to modulate inner intensity through the body and voice (1972). As discussed at length in Chapter 15, Antonin Artaud, who was inspired by his interactions with esoteric non-Western religious traditions, envisioned the actor as a “crude empiricist” who, through control of the breath, would be able to place the breath in specific locations in the body in order to cause psychophysiological “vibrations” which would “increase the internal density and volume of his feeling” and “provoke . . . a spontaneous reappearance of life,” that is, of emotional states (Cole and Chinoy 1970).

Sklar (Chapter 10) describes how the actor trained in Decroux’s Promethean mime has feet which stay “rooted to the ground while the upper body fights against the uplift of gravity to perform expressive attitudes,” thus creating an internal dynamic tension between the full torso and the feet not unlike that which Tadashi Suzuki emphasizes in the development of a “grammar of the feet” through which his actors become rooted to the earth. Sklar describes the development of internal tensions “between adjacent body parts” – what Decroux called “*dynamo rythme*” which “combines duration and speed with degrees of muscular tension.” Not surprisingly, Sklar uses an analogy from the playing of the violin to explain one of Decroux’s *dynamo rythmes*, the *fondue* or “the sustain,” where “like a note held on

the violin, *the fondu* involves continual slow movement at constant velocity with a constant degree of muscular tension.”

For Western actors who self-consciously create their art with a sense of full body engagement – whether Meyerhold’s Biomechanics, Decroux’s mime, a Copeau-inspired use of the mask or martial arts, Dario Fo (Chapter 20), Rachel Rosenthal (Chapter 23), or David Warrilow (Chapter 25) – an awareness of the body’s internal psychophysiological dynamics of creating the particular is foregrounded whether that is applied to creating a psychologically “real” character or to some other set of task-based actions. In all such approaches the issue of consciousness is central to understanding embodiment, such as Lendra’s comparison of the actor’s ideal state of awareness to a state of ritual trance in Bali.¹³

AMONG ALTERNATIVES

Among the numerous alternative approaches to the body, training, and performance developed since the 1970s, among the most important internationally-known integrative, environmental approaches is that developed by The Centre for Theatre Practices “Gardzienice” of Poland. Paul Allain’s account (Chapter 16) provides an overview of Gardzienice’s training and performance work (see also Hodge 2000: 224ff.). Under the direction of Włodzimierz Staniewski, Gardzienice was founded in 1977, and has toured its five performances throughout the world. Their work combines an often acrobatic psychophysical process – including their own particular form of night-running – with an emphasis on singing, musicality, and use of the breath. All these elements are intended to develop an extremely strong awareness of mutuality, and therefore generosity, among the performers and their audiences. Allain provides a detailed description of how Gardzienice has applied their training to the development and performance of their fifth performance, *Carmina Burana*, when it premiered in November 1990.

SCIENCE, THE PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGICAL BASIS OF “EMOTIONAL” EXPRESSION, AND TRAINING THE BODY

The final essay in which the body and training are (re)considered by Bloch *et al.* (Chapter 17) is best read alongside Konijn’s (Chapter 6) (re)consideration of the relationship between acting and emotion across various styles of acting. While Konijn is primarily focused on meta-theoretical issues arising from the new perspective on emotion developed by cognitive psychology, Bloch and her collaborators have focused on practical use of neurological investigation of basic prototypical emotional states. Bloch’s research represents a small but significant portion of scientific research on the nature of emotional expression and affect in the actor, and which, in its regard to the neuro- and psychophysiological basis of the actor’s art of emotional expression, focuses scientific attention on the interior dynamics of the actor’s art discussed above.¹⁴ Since Darwin and William James focused on the nature of emotional expression, studies of emotion became the province of ethologists, psychologists, and most recently neurophysiologists. Going considerably beyond the research of Paul Ekman (1984) on facial expression,¹⁵ Bloch and her collaborators have attempted not only to study the neurophysiological dimensions of emotional expression but also to construct a

psychophysiological system for training actors in emotional expression which includes, for each particular emotion to be inhabited and expressed: (1) a characteristic breathing pattern; (2) activation of a particular set of muscular patterns when assuming a complete posture of the body; and (3) activation of specific patterns of facial muscles.

In the essay included here which summarizes the basic methods and findings of their long-term research and practice, Bloch and her associates clearly assert that “real-life” emotions and artistically created “emotional” expressions have a physiological correspondence, yet nevertheless are different. Taking their general model of the actor from Artaud, as an “athlete of the heart” (*athlète affectif*), they define the techniques as a psychophysiological based set of “instrumental techniques for learning how to express [voluntarily] an emotion.”¹⁶ In contrast with the commonplace assumption that stage and everyday emotions are the same, Bloch and her associates insist that they are different. Unlike the experience of a “real-life” emotion, the actor is able to move freely from one emotional state to another.

Key to their technique is the priority given to a complete psychophysiological training for the actor which emphasizes the development of breath control, as well as control of the body’s musculature, both of which allow the actor the freedom to modulate the intensity and location of the breath in the voluntary creation of emotional states – a view of the physiological basis of acting and emotional expression implicit in many of the earlier essays. Helpfully, they see the “set” of patterns that they have identified not as a restrictive set of patterns to be replicated but “as a tool, that is, as a technical support for . . . acting behaviour so as not to depend almost exclusively on their own personal experience and/or limitations.”

The description by Bloch and her associates of the psychophysiological process of breath control and muscular contractions basic to inducing each effector pattern is strikingly similar to that of the interior psychophysiological processes of some traditional Asian actors and to Artaud’s ideas outlined above. Bloch’s research establishes a scientific basis for understanding how the “flame” underneath the stewpot can be modulated in a neuro- and psychophysiological way by the trained actor to produce dynamic affects both in the actor and presumably in an audience enculturated to a particular mode of emotional expression.

8

AN AMULET MADE OF MEMORY:

The significance of exercises in the actor's dramaturgy¹

Eugenio Barba

THE REVOLUTION OF THE INVISIBLE

In the 20th century a revolution of the invisible has taken place. The importance of hidden structures was disclosed in physics as in sociology, in psychology as in art and myth. A similar revolution also happened in theatre, with the peculiarity that the invisible structures, in this case, were not something to be discovered in order to understand how reality functioned, but rather something to be re-created onstage to give greater vitality to scenic fiction.

The invisible “something” that breathes life into what the spectator sees is the actor's subscore. By subscore I do not mean a hidden scaffolding, but a resonance, a motion, an impulse, a level of cellular organization that supports still further levels of organization. These levels extend from the effectiveness of the presence of the individual actor to the interweaving of their relationships, from the organization of space to dramaturgical choices. The organic interaction between the different levels of organization brings out the meaning that the performance assumes for the spectator.

The subtext – as Stanislavsky called it – is a particular type of subscore. The subscore does not necessarily consist of the unexpressed intentions and thoughts of a character, of the interpretation of his/her motivations. The subscore may consist of a rhythm, a song, a certain way of breathing, or an action that is not carried out in its original dimensions but is absorbed and miniaturized by the actor who, without showing it, is guided by its dynamism even in immobility.

A Physical Action:

THE SMALLEST PERCEPTIBLE ACTION

Stanislavsky, who was considered by many to be a master of psychological interpretation, analysed characters and motivations with the meticulous perspicacity of a novelist. His aim was to deduce from the intricate web of the subtext a series of supporting points for the life of the “physical actions.” And when he spoke of “physical actions,” he meant above all a succession of attitudes or movements possessed of their own inner life.

If I have to define for myself a physical action, I think of a gentle breath of wind on an ear of corn. The corn is the attention of the spectator. It is not shaken as by a gust in a storm, but that gentle breath is just enough to upset its perpendicularity.

If I have to indicate a physical action to an actor, I suggest recognizing it by elimination, distinguishing it from a simple “movement” or “gesture.” I tell him or her: a “physical action” is the “smallest perceptible action” and is recognizable by the fact that even if you make a microscopic movement (the tiniest displacement of the hand, for example), the entire tonicity of the body changes. A real action produces a change in the tensions in your whole body and subsequently a change in the perception of the spectator. In other words, it originates in the torso, in the spinal cord. It is not the elbow that moves the hand, not the shoulder that moves the arm, rather, each dynamic impulse is rooted in the torso. This is one of the conditions for the existence of an organic action.

It is obvious that the organic action is not enough. If, in the end, it is not enlivened by an inner dimension, then the action remains empty and the actor appears to be controlled by the form of the score.

I do not think there is a unique method for generating inner life. I believe the method is one of negation: not to impede the development of one’s inner life.

This can be learned on the condition that you act as if it cannot be learned.

THE AGE OF EXERCISES

The revolution of the invisible marked, in theatre, the age of exercises.

A good exercise is a paradigm of dramaturgy, i.e., a model for the actor. The expression “dramaturgy of the actor” refers to one of the levels of organization of the performance or to one aspect of the dramaturgical interweaving. Indeed, in every performance there are numerous dramaturgical levels, some more evident than others, and all necessary for the re-creation of life onstage.

But what is the essential difference between an exercise (which I have defined as a “paradigm of dramaturgy”) and dramaturgy in the traditional sense: comedy, tragedy, or farce? In each case it is a question of a well-contrived web of actions. But whereas comedies, tragedies, and farces have a form and a content, exercises are pure form, dynamic developments without a plot, a story. Exercises are small labyrinths that the actors’ body-minds can trace and retrace in order to incorporate a paradoxical way of thinking, thereby distancing themselves from their own daily behavior and entering the domain of the stage’s extra-daily behaviour.

Exercises are like amulets, which the actor carries around, not to show them off, but to draw from them certain qualities of energy out of which a second nervous system slowly develops. An exercise is made up of memory, body-memory. An exercise becomes memory, which acts through the entire body.

At the beginning of the 20th century, when Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, and their collaborators invented “exercises” for the formation of actors, they gave birth to a paradox. Their exercises were something quite different from the training followed by students at theatre schools. By tradition, actors practiced fencing, ballet, singing, and, above all, the recitation and acting of particular fragments of classical plays. The “exercises,” on the other hand, were elaborate scores, codified down to the smallest detail, and an end in themselves.

All this is evident when we scrutinize the oldest of the exercises passed down to us, those which Meyerhold conceived and called “biomechanics” and whose aim was to teach “the essence of scenic movement.”

There are at least ten characteristics that distinguish an exercise and explain its effectiveness as dramaturgy reserved for the nonpublic work of actors, i.e., the work on oneself:

1. Exercises are primarily a pedagogical fiction. The actor learns not to learn to be an actor or, in other words, learns not to learn to act. Exercises teach how to think with the entire body-mind.
2. Exercises teach how to carry out a real action (not “realistic,” but real).
3. Exercises teach that precision in form is essential in a real action. An exercise has a beginning and an end, and the path between these two points is not linear but fraught with peripeteias, changes, leaps, turning points, and contrasts.
4. The dynamic form of an exercise is a continuity constituted by a series of phases. In order to learn the exercise precisely it is divided up into segments. This process teaches how to think of continuity as a succession of minute but well-defined phases (or perceptible actions). An exercise is an ideogram made up of strokes and, like all ideograms, must always follow the same succession. But each single stroke can vary in thickness, intensity, and impetus.
5. Each phase of an exercise engages the entire body. The transition from one phase to another is a “sats.”²
6. Every phase of an exercise dilates, refines, or miniaturizes certain dynamisms of daily behavior. In this way these dynamisms are isolated and “edited”; they become a montage and underline the play of tensions, contrasts, oppositions – in other words, all the elements of basic dramaticity that transform daily behaviour into the extra-daily behaviour of the stage.
7. The different phases of the exercise make the actor experience his or her own body not as a unity but as a centre for simultaneous actions. In the beginning, this experience coincides with a painful sense of expropriation of the actor’s own spontaneity. Later it turns into the fundamental quality of the actor: a presence ready to be projected in diverging directions and capable of attracting the attention of the spectator.
8. Exercises teach us how to repeat. Learning to repeat is not difficult as long as it is a question of knowing how to execute a score with ever greater precision. It becomes difficult in the next phase. Here the difficulty lies in repeating continuously without becoming dull, which presupposes discovering and motivating new details, new points of departure within the familiar score.
9. The exercise is the way of refusal: it teaches renunciation through fatigue and commitment to a humble task.
10. An exercise is not work on the text but on oneself. It puts the actor to the test through a series of obstacles. It allows the actor to get to know him- or herself through an encounter with his or her own limits, not through self-analysis.

Exercises teach how to work on what is visible through using repeatable forms. These forms are empty. At the beginning, they are filled with the concentration necessary for the successful execution of each single phase. Once they have been mastered, either they die or they are filled by the capacity for improvisation. This capacity consists in the ability to vary the execution of the diverse phases, the



Fig. 8.1 *Note from Eugenio Barba regarding photographs 8.1–8.5 of training at the Odin Teatret:* Throughout the years, many of our exercises aimed at developing a dynamic different from the daily one, focusing on the spine and balance. Torgeir Hethal, training in the 1960s. (Odin Teatret photograph.)



Fig. 8.2 Iben Nagel Rasmussen, training in the 1970s. (Photo by Torben Huss.)



Fig. 8.3 Roberta Carreri and Julia Varley, training in the 1980s. (Photo by C. Falke.)



Fig. 8.4 Roberta Carreri, training in the 1980s. (Photo by Flora Bemporad.)



Fig. 8.5 Julia Varley, training in the 1980s. (Photo by Flora Bemporad.)

images behind them (for example, to move like an astronaut on the moon), their rhythms (to different music), the chains of mental associations.

In this way a subscore develops from the score of the exercise.

The value of the visible (the score) and the invisible (the subscore) generates the possibility of making them carry on a dialogue, creating a space within the design of movements and their precision.

The dialogue between the visible and the invisible is precisely that which the actor experiences as inner life and in some cases even as meditation. And it is what the spectator experiences as interpretation.

THE COMPLEXITY OF EMOTION

When we speak of dramaturgy we should think of montage. The performance is a complete system in and of itself, integrating diverse elements – each obeying its own logic and all interacting among themselves and with the exterior.

The dramaturgy of the actor means, above all, the capacity to construct the equivalent of the complexity that characterizes action in life. This construction, which is perceived as a character, must have a sensorial and mental impact on the spectator. The objective of the actor's dramaturgy is the capacity to stimulate affective reactions.

This may seem a paradox, since many people, banalizing Brecht (especially those who have not seen performances that he directed), maintain that the actor should not touch the spectators emotionally but stimulate them into detached reflection and judgment.

Reflection, comprehension, and judgment are, however, also affective reactions. They are emotions.

There is a naïve conception according to which emotion is a force that takes hold of and overwhelms a person. But an emotion is a complex pattern of reactions to a stimulus.

The complex web of reactions expressed by the term “emotion” is characterized by the activation of at least five levels of organization, which inhibit each other in turn but which are all simultaneously present:

1. a subjective change, which we normally call “feeling”: for example, fear (a dog comes up to me in the street);
2. a series of cognitive evaluations (I consider: the dog seems well behaved);
3. the manifestation of involuntary autonomous reactions (acceleration of the heartbeat, or breathing, sweating);
4. an impulse to react (I want to walk away quickly);
5. the decision on how to behave (I force myself to walk calmly).

It is the complexity of the emotion and not a vague feeling that the actor must reconstruct.

We must therefore work on all the different levels that we have identified as characterizing an “emotion,” which – although belonging to the world of the invisible – are nevertheless physically concrete.

Moreover, each of these levels is guided by its own coherence.

The complexity is achieved by interweaving simple elements in opposition or in harmony, but always simultaneously. All this offers infinite possibilities, theatrically

speaking. I can construct my reactions towards the dog by working separately with the different parts of my body: my legs behave courageously, for example; my torso and arms, slightly introverted, reveal assessment and reflection; my head reacts as if to move away; while the rhythm of the blinking of my eyelids reconstructs the equivalent of the autonomous involuntary reactions.

The complexity of the result is attained by working on simple elements, each one separate, then put together level by level, interwoven repeatedly, until they melt into an organic unity which reveals the essence of the complexity that characterizes every living form.

It is this passage from the simple to the “simultaneous multiplicity” that the exercise teaches: the nonlinear development of minute perceptible actions, subject to peripeteias, changes, leaps, turns, and contrasts, through the interaction of clearly defined phases.

In a word, by artificially reconstructing complexity, the exercise encounters drama.

– *translated by Judy Barba*

9

MEYERHOLD'S BIOMECHANICS¹

Mel Gordon

In my Biomechanics, I was able to determine altogether twelve or thirteen rules for the training of an actor. But when I polish it, I'll leave perhaps no more than eight.

(Vsevolod Meyerhold)

Biomechanics was a system of actor-training that Meyerhold devised shortly after the Revolution. Although not always clearly understood, it received wide attention during the twenties and thirties owing to Meyerhold's unique position as the foremost revolutionary avant-garde director. Curiously, Meyerhold's own conceptions about Biomechanics, which were almost unchanged throughout his career, appeared to be both grandiose and seemingly modest. While maintaining that the mastery of Biomechanics afforded the actor all the essential skills necessary for scenic movement – skills that would take the ordinary actor nearly a life-time to learn, he relegated his own class in Biomechanics at the Meyerhold Workshop to a status equal to that of the other studies in body movement that were taught there, such as acrobatics, modern dance, or *eurhythmics*. Partly because of this apparently paradoxical attitude and partly because of the similar theoretical foundations of Meyerhold's training program and his early post-revolutionary systems of acting, Soviet and Western critics were frequently confused as to the theatrical function and application of Biomechanics.

THE SIXTEEN *ÉTUDES* IN THE MEYERHOLD STUDIO

Meyerhold's first work in schematic actor-training predates the Revolution and at least goes back to his course in stage movement at the Meyerhold Studio in St Petersburg in 1914. There, with Vladimir N. Soloviev, an expert on the *commedia dell'arte* and the Spanish theatre of the seventeenth century, Meyerhold developed a series of Sixteen *Études* and pantomimes, which he and Soloviev abstracted from various theatrical cultures. Purportedly, each of the sixteen exercises was designed to teach the students a number of particular principles of scenic movement, such as

how to move in a circle, square, or triangle; how the alternation of the numbers of even and odd characters on stage affect the style of acting; the relationship between movement and the shape of acting platforms or proscenium boundaries; the traditional “antics appropriate to the theatre,” involving the contrast between the space-and-time realities of the stage and life; the relationship between the metric basis of music and movement (including the idea of pauses in movement); working with stage properties; and generally the effects of acting on the spectator (the difference between large and small gestures). These exercises, some of which were performed publicly on 12 February, 2 March, and 29 March 1915, in conjunction with other plays and sketches, resemble the later Biomechanics in several ways.

Meyerhold, in these Sixteen *Études*, attempted to create a limited and precise system of exercises that contained all the fundamental expressive situations that an actor would encounter on the stage. They differed from Biomechanics in a purely functional manner – the Sixteen *Études*, mainly, pertained to Meyerhold’s pre-revolutionary studio work, which was a synthesis of many traditional theatre conventions, while Biomechanics was designed as a more universal system for many kinds of theatre. No doubt the failure of Soloviev and Meyerhold to discover actual Elizabethan or *commedia* training techniques heavily influenced their decision to create such a system. Yet, even beyond their format, the Sixteen *Études* bear other resemblances to Biomechanics; for instance, in the circus buffonades or in the use of shouts and cries instead of words.

Although the only detailed documentation we have of the *études* are those few that were demonstrated in 1915 and described in Meyerhold’s theatrical journal, *Love for Three Oranges* (Braun 1979: 149–51), the titles and brief generic descriptions themselves provide the reader with some information as to their possible use in actor training:

- 1 Two Baskets, or Who Got the Better of Whom. An *étude* composed of “antics appropriate to the theatre.”
- 2 Two Jongleurs, an Old Woman with a Snake, and the Bloody Climax Under the Canopy. Pantomime composed by Meyerhold and Soloviev.
- 3 Ophelia. An *étude* of the mad scene from *Hamlet*.
- 4 The Story of the Page Who was Faithful to his Master and of Other Events Worthy of Presentation. An *étude* treated in the style of a sentimental, late seventeenth-century story (performed on the main stage; training in slow motion).
- 5 Harlequin, the Vendor of Bastinadoes. A pantomime in the style of the French harlequinade of 1850 (“antics appropriate to the theatre”).
- 6 Fragment of a Chinese Play – “The Catwoman, the Bird, and the Snake.” A pantomime by Meyerhold and Soloviev (use of Chinese scenic conventions as might be interpreted by Carlo Gozzi; use of *mise en scene* to create illusion of more characters than actually appear).
- 7 The Two Esmeraldas. A sketch from a *commedia* scenario.
- 8 Collin Maillard. An *étude* performed in profile in the manner of Lancret’s paintings.
- 9 The Street Jongleurs. A pantomime in the style of the popular performances of the late eighteenth-century Venice (use of stage audience to guide emotions of real audience; acting on two levels; “antics appropriate to the theatre”).

- 10 From Five Chairs to a Quadrille. An *étude* by Meyerhold and Soloviev in the manner of the 1840s.
- 11 The Baker and the Chimney Sweep. An *étude*.
- 12 The Loss of the Handbags.
- 13 The Cord.
- 14 Three of Them.
- 15 Three Oranges, the Astrological Telescope, or What One's Love for the Stage Masters May Lead To. A circus buffonade (use of trick properties; "antics appropriate to the theatre").
- 16 How They Carried Out Their Intentions.

Four years after the revolution, with the demise of the mass spectacle movement, an apparent decline in the general quality of the proletarian theatres became obvious. Meyerhold, who placed the utmost importance in the development of these amateur and semi-professional workers' troupes as both an educational and social tool for the masses and as a bulwark against the bourgeois academic theatres, was deeply dissatisfied with their clumsy and ineffectual attempts at acting. Lacking any formal training, many of the new mass actors simply mounted the stage and gracelessly declaimed speeches, very much in the manner of provincial melodrama protagonists without regard to the *mise en scene*, stage size, or audience. The irony lay, Meyerhold felt, in the fact that the theatre, whose social function was to educate and promote the socialist and scientific reconstruction of Russia, had retreated to archaic and basically rural forms, whereas other sectors of Soviet society were already going through a process of rapid collectivization and industrialization.

If the theatre were to survive and play a dynamic part in the future Soviet culture, Meyerhold thought, then it too would have to be transformed by the same factors that were guiding the rest of Soviet life. Thus, drawing on the scientific methodologies that were then current in Soviet industry and culture (Taylorism) and in Soviet psychology and education (reflexology), Meyerhold began to formulate his own scientific, and therefore indisputable, foundations for actor-training, "the laws of Biomechanics."

TAYLORISM

The work of Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856–1915), the American inventor who pioneered the study of *scientific management* at the turn of the century, became widely known throughout Europe in the early 1910s. In 1918, Lenin himself held up Taylor's principles of scientific management, or Taylorism, as a primary example of those achievements of capitalism, which, however brutal and exploitive in intent – the augmentation of work output and resulting profits – represented a grand and revolutionary approach to the entire work process worthy of Soviet emulation.

Investigating each work unit on a production line, Taylor came to the conclusion that the workers' physical movements were among the least efficient in the entire factory. The worker, while performing his prescribed task, would often engage in superfluous and awkward motions, causing a premature strain in his muscles and generally lowering his work output. Taylor, analyzing the execution of each task according to precise motions, which he timed and regulated within fractions of a second, sought to find the most efficient movements and gestures for each kind of

work. Calling his study *motion economy*, Taylor had soon to take into account such nonlinear and unmechanical factors as work-rhythms, balance, muscular groupings, fatigue, and “rest minutes.” Through trial and error, Taylor developed a system of *work cycles*, each involving a whole network of movements and pauses, allowing the worker to produce the greatest work output with the least amount of strain.

Although Taylor seemed to relish the variance and multiplicity of detail in his movement analyses, many of his American followers sought to delimit and abstract certain principles from his study of motion economy in order to make them more universal. (Frank and Lillian Gilbreth had already discovered in 1912 sixteen fundamental hand movements [*therbligs*] that were cross-occupational.) After Taylor’s death in 1915, several such generalized tables began to appear. From these, seven fundamental Taylorist principles on the use of the human body in the work process evolved:

- 1 Smooth continuous curved motions of the hands are preferable to straight-line motions involving sudden and sharp changes in direction.
- 2 Both hands should begin and complete their actions simultaneously.
- 3 The two hands should never be idle at the same time, except during work pauses.
- 4 Motions of the arms should be made in opposite and symmetrical directions, and should be made simultaneously.
- 5 Hand and body motions should be confined to those muscles that require the least amount of exertion (usually the fingers, forearm, and shoulder).
- 6 Movements involving the single contraction of a positive muscle group are faster, easier, and more accurate than movements caused by sets of antagonist muscles.
- 7 Rhythmic movements are, generally, the most efficient.

A.K. Gastev (1881–1941), the foremost Soviet Taylorist, went even further than his American counterparts in the reduction of Taylor’s principles. He maintained that once the worker attained perfect mastery over the handling of (a) the hammer, (b) the knife, and (c) the pick, he would be able to run any piece of machinery, no matter how complex. This basic idea – the single, outwardly simple, yet complex and difficult pedagogical device – was to have a special appeal for Meyerhold.

REFLEXOLOGY

Shortly before 1900, several schools of “objective psychology” arose independently in America and Russia. While differing in their findings and temperament, they shared similar sentiments toward the introspective trends in psychology, which they vigorously attacked. Rejecting the notion of the soul outright and minimizing the significance of the intangible unconscious, the “objectivists” looked for other ways of explaining behavior.

William James, the American psychologist (1842–1910), who was unable to exorcise his states of severe depression through his own mental faculties, began to investigate the actual visceral nature of emotion. Many of the folk maxims that prescribed seemingly irrational, secondary actions for the reduction of unpleasant emotional states “such as, ‘Whistle when you pass a graveyard’ or ‘When you’re so angry that you can’t speak, just count to ten’” he surmised were nothing more than the application of effective reflex reactions. Experimenting on himself, James concluded that emotional consciousness and its transitory states were directly

linked to the physical body; in fact, the body's automatic response to stimuli itself was the emotion, preceding the mental perception of the emotion. Using the dictum, "I saw the bear, I ran, I became frightened," James attempted to demonstrate the physiological basis of his theory: to trigger the sensation of fear, a person would only have to run – with his eyebrows raised and pupils dilated. Regardless of what the person was stimulated by or thinking, an automatic reflex signifying fear would be felt throughout his body. Surprisingly, James stayed away from any formalized theory or system, believing that while certain patterns of muscular activity elicited certain emotional states, each of these states varied with the individual body and were, therefore, infinite and unclassifiable.

In Russia at this time, Vladimir Bekhterev (1857–1927) had already begun his research toward the discovery of the precise laws that govern human reflexive action and behavior, or reflexology. Like James and Pavlov, whose studies of conditioned reflexes in animals were linked to his own, Bekhterev rejected the old subjectivist psychology as intuitive and unscientific. Working with children and groups of criminals, he formulated his theory of "associated motor reflexes": all human behavior can be explained by the pattern of reflexes produced by the environment in the individual's nervous system. Once fully developed, Bekhterev maintained, the science of reflexology would eventually replace psychology since all human motivation and behavior could then not only be understood and predicted according to immutable laws of biology and sociology but also be instantly changed under laboratory conditions. Although Bekhterev himself was unable to provide a large body of supportive data, his theories were widely circulated among physiologists, psychologists, and educators after the Revolution.

CONSTRUCTIVISM AND THE "LAWS OF BIOMECHANICS"

Constructivism in the Soviet theatre, of which Meyerhold was a chief exponent, was a scientifically based movement that embraced many kinds of theatres that shared particular ideas about staging, design, and function from 1922 to 1926. Since Taylorism and reflexology formed part of the ideological cornerstones of both Constructivist acting and staging and Biomechanics, critics expected them to be closely alike. After having been told that the Taylorization of the theatre would make it possible to perform a four-hour play in one, they were quite bewildered to find few working gestures and many slow motion ones in the biomechanical *études* performed at the public exhibitions. One critic, Ippolit Sokolov, dismissed Meyerhold's Biomechanics as anti-Taylorist and rehashed circus clowning.

In Meyerhold's mechanistic vision of the theatre as factory and schoolroom – the use of the fastest and most efficient methods (Taylorism) to produce a predetermined audience reaction (reflexology) – we find a total emphasis on work output, that is, the manufacture of effects in the spectator, creating a desired state of mind. Allowing for the fact that there was a finite number of effects and states of mind, the Constructivist director/engineer was free to calibrate the theatrical components at his disposal (dramatic text, staging areas, scenery, properties, costuming, lighting, styles of acting, speech, music, tempo, etc.) in nearly inexhaustible combinations, toward a single goal. In this, the Constructivist director worked much like Taylor, who approached each task differently, seeking a unique strategy for the execution of economic and efficient movements. On the other hand, Meyerhold,

like Gastev, was searching for certain core movements that would train the new precision worker in the efficient execution of all of his prescribed tasks. Even the training system itself would have to be a model of economy: a concise, but comprehensive, program that would require a minimum amount of time to learn. (The number of *études* in Biomechanics varied from seven to more than twenty, generally staying at twelve or thirteen.) Just as Gastev had created a whole series of paradigmatic working movements from the perfect execution of a seemingly unsophisticated task such as swinging a pick, which was unlike any of the complex machinery Gastev's workers were being trained to operate, Meyerhold fashioned each of his biomechanical *études* to contain complex bundles of physical activity that superficially appeared to be simple and unrelated to the Constructivist acting styles. Yet, every *étude* was to be a fountainhead of lessons in the development of expressive movement, culminating in a system that had utilized every essential principle in scenic movement that an actor might encounter.

Taking stock of his extensive theatrical background, Meyerhold selected and refined the biomechanical *études* from a host of sources that he found most dynamic or "theatrical" – circus, music hall, boxing, gymnastics, military discipline, the Chinese theatre, and *kabuki*, as well as those theatrical cultures in his pre-revolutionary career from which he devised his Sixteen *Études*. Dividing each gesture of the *études* into exact movements, Meyerhold was able to apply both Taylorist principles of motion economy and James' emotion theory to the actor, causing him automatically to experience an entire gamut of emotions owing to a constantly changing arrangement of his musculature. This would also enable the actor to establish precisely the relationship between his physical appearance and his own inner nervous feelings. As Meyerhold told Harold Clurman in 1935, "Each exercise is a melodrama. Each movement gives the actor a sense of performing on the stage."

Other elements of Taylorism and reflexology were directly incorporated into Biomechanics. Meyerhold's conception of the *acting cycle* (Intention; Realization; and Reaction, Refusal, or Point of Repetition) was closely modeled after Taylor's *working cycles* and functioned similarly. Also Pavlov's conditioning experiments were employed with mainly sound stimuli to perfect the actor's state of "reflex excitability," his ability to realize an externally prescribed task with the minimum amount of forethought.

ROLE OF BIOMECHANICS

Except in its developmental stage, Meyerhold conceived of Biomechanics as having a lesser importance in his theatre than in almost any other. The goal of Biomechanics was to instruct the new actor in all the essentials of scenic movement, and Meyerhold had hoped that his own actors would go far beyond that. Biomechanics was created as a standardized, but minimal, program for the training of the revolutionary actor. For instance, in a Ukrainian Proletkult troupe, the actors might study medieval Ukrainian military drills, gymnastics, modern dance techniques, choral speech, diction, and Biomechanics. In an amateur workers' club theatre, where the actors might be severely restricted in time and training space, only machine movements, verse reading, and Biomechanics might be practiced. Biomechanics was to be the common training link and, however high in comparison

with the bourgeois theatres, the lowest standard of actor-training in the proletarian and Constructivist theatres.

In Meyerhold's own workshop, besides Biomechanics, the actors were schooled by professionals in fencing, boxing, Dalcroze *eurhythmics*, classical ballet, floor gymnastics, modern dance, "tripod positioning," cabaret dance, juggling, diction, speech, music, and many other disciplines that Meyerhold thought would be useful to the actor for a particular production or for his general education, such as practice in *pre-acting*, theatrical history, economics, biology. Clearly, the greater amount of movement skills at the actor's disposal, the more efficiently he could carry out a variety of tasks. Still, because of the difficulty of training instructors, and Meyerhold's private feeling that it was not yet wholly perfected, Biomechanics, with few exceptions, remained the sole property of the Meyerhold Theatre.

BIOMECHANICS IN THE MEYERHOLD WORKSHOP

Occasionally assisted by Meyerhold, the biomechanic instructors Valeri Inkidjinov, Mikhail Korenev, and later Nikolai Kustov each designed their own daily one-hour sessions for every group of actors, which varied from eight to nearly thirty members. Typically, a single session consisted of the practice of supplementary biomechanical exercises, which were keyed to the physical execution of the *études*, and two biomechanical *études* separated by one fifteen-minute rest period.

The actors were asked to wear light uniforms – blue shirts and shorts for the women, and shirts and trousers for men. Many of the *études*, which were designed to teach the actor maximum movement in space through exact coordinates, necessitated that the actor be aware of certain lines and creases in his costume.

Most of the Biomechanics were performed to the accompaniment of piano music, which guided the actor in setting an emotional tempo that sometimes conflicted with the natural rhythmic organization of the *étude*. This technique was diametrically opposed to Boris Ferdinandov's use of the metronome in actor-training at his Experimental Heroic Theatre. The music itself, which varied from classical and romantic melodies to a kind of vaudevillian type, functioned differently in each *étude*, frequently correlating body rhythms to melody; at other times, notes and tempos were played against rests and breathing spans. The biomechanical exercises, unlike the *études* – since their purpose was a purely physical adjunct for the psycho/physical *études* – were performed without music.

The first movement the actors learned was the *dactyl* (not illustrated), a signaling exercise that signified the precise moment of initiation for most, and the completion for some, of the biomechanical *études*. There were two kinds of *dactyls*, a complete and a simple form. In the complete form:

- (a) The actor, beginning with a complete relaxation of all muscles,
- (b) suddenly claps his hands twice in a short upward motion which
- (c) his body follows until he stands on the balls of his feet.
- (d) Then, bending his knees,
- (e) he immediately claps his hands twice in a violent and downward motion,
- (f) throwing his arms back as they separate after the last clap.
- (g) This abrupt movement is transferred to the actor's entire body in a forward

and downward motion as the momentum of energy is conveyed to his calves and feet. The actor is now prepared to perform the *étude*.

The simple *dactyl* eliminated the steps (b) and (c).

The *dactyl* aided the actor in establishing an exact instant of concentration and provided him with a timing device to coordinate his actions with the other participants before the execution of the *étude*.

13 BIOMECHANICAL ÉTUDES

The following partial reconstruction of thirteen of Meyerhold's Biomechanics was derived from published and unpublished accounts by participants and observers of Meyerhold's acting workshops.

1 Shooting the Bow

- (a) The actor executes two *dactyls*; the second *dactyl* is performed at a very fast tempo (*not illustrated*).
- (b) The actor falls to the floor.
- (c) He draws his legs and arms together.
- (d) Rising on his right foot, he slowly draws up an imaginary bow.
- (e) The actor advances with his left shoulder forward and his right foot back.
- (f) Spotting an imaginary target, he transfers his weight from his right foot to his left and back to the right foot.
- (g) Describing an arc with its center at his right shoulder, the actor's balance is shifted from the right leg to the left and back again to the right.
- (h) He draws an imaginary arrow from his belt, or imaginary quiver.
- (i) Very quickly he bends his upper torso toward the floor.
- (j) Now, slowly the actor straightens up, holding his extended arms in a rigid position. The left arm is drawn out toward the front and the right arm is thrown back to a slightly lower level (*not illustrated*).
- (k) He slowly loads the imaginary bow and draws it back.
- (l) The actor aims.
- (m) He fires with a shout.
- (n) His body immediately contorts like a sprung bow into positions of "refusal."

Fig. 9.1 Shooting the Bow.



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)



(f)



(f)



(g)



(g)



(g)



(h)



(i)



(k)



(l)



(m)



(n)



(n)



(n)

**Multiple sequence****Objectives**

Example of Acting Cycle: Intention, Realization, Refusal of the Action, Development of free, broad shoulder and arm movements. Use of horizontal extensions of the body for finding centers of gravity. Use of feet in establishing balance. Practice of falling and lifting gestures.

Comment

According to Alexei Gripič, this *étude* probably had its source in Meyerhold's pre-revolutionary actor-training work. It was also later utilized by Stanislavsky in his studio work.

2 Throwing the stone

- (a) Actor executes a *dactyl*.
- (b) He then leaps, turns to the right, and lands with his left foot forward. His knees are bent with his right hand in front, the left behind.
- (c) The actor runs.
- (d) He jumps again, landing on his left foot with his left shoulder forward.
- (e) He straightens his body. Both arms hang loose and are perfectly symmetrical to each other.

- (f) He rises on his toes, then drops to his right knee. His body is swayed backward and forward.
- (g) Picking up an imaginary stone in his right hand, the actor rises, swings his right arm around in a wide arc to the left, across to the front and back, behind his body, where it hangs. His left shoulder is high, the right low with the right hand at knee level. The knees are slightly bent.
- (h) He steps backwards.
- (i) With the imaginary stone still grasped in his right hand behind the body, the actor begins to run. His left shoulder is raised.
- (j) He stops with a slight jump, landing with left foot in front.
- (k) After his right arm is swung across the chest, the left hand grips the wrist.
- (l) The body weight is transferred to the right foot. Still clasped by the left hand, the right arm is swept back and is swung in an arc with its base at the shoulder. The actor releases his left hand, permitting the right arm to form a wide, complete circle.
- (m) Arresting the circular movement, the right arm is held out in front while the actor searches for an imaginary target.
- (n) He runs a few steps forward and jumps.
- (o) Preparing the throw, he swings his right arm and leg back.
- (p) He throws the imaginary stone, twisting his right side forward, left back.
- (q) Kneeling on his right knee, the actor claps his hands, then cups his right ear as if listening for the result.
- (r) (The imaginary mark is hit.) He points with his left arm and leans back with the right arm on the right hip.
- (s) Rising, he executes a *dactyl*.

Objectives

Example of a complex Acting Cycle with multiple preparations, actions, reactions, and pauses. Development of free curved motions and balance. Use of arms and shoulders in establishing the center of gravity while in movement. Exercise in reflex excitability to sound stimulus (q).

Comment

Etude is performed in alternating tempos.

Note

This description is taken from Andre van Gyseghem's *Theatre in Soviet Russia*, 1943, the only published detailed account. Although the *étude* was a basic part of Biomechanics, no photographs were made available.

3 The Slap in the Face

- (a) Two actors stand facing each other at a distance of three feet. Their feet are parallel with the toes firmly planted and slightly to the right. Standing on the

balls of their feet, their heels are almost off the floor. Their heads are tilted forward with the shoulders raised. The knees and arms are bent.

- (b) Both actors execute a *dactyl*.
- (c) The first actor steps forward with his left foot, placing it directly in front of the right. It points to the right, perpendicular to the right foot. He rotates his upper torso to face right. His face is directed toward his partner. The knees are bent with the weight forward on the left foot. Meanwhile, the partner has stepped forward on his left foot, which is placed six inches from the axis of his right foot. The partner's chest is on a 45° diagonal from his original position.
- (d) Simultaneously, both actors lean backward, transferring their weight to their right feet. The first actor, with his right arm outstretched and hand open, shifts farther back until his left foot is almost off the floor.



Fig. 9.2 The Slap in the Face (d).



Fig. 9.3 The Slap in the Face (f).

- (e) Moving his right arm in a wide circular path to the right side, the first actor twists his body to the right as his weight is transferred forward to the left foot, which is moved back. The partner also moves forward and to the center.
- (f) The partner tilts his head to the right as first actor's upward-pointing hand slowly approaches.
- (g) The first actor quickly throws his left hand to the lower right side of partner's face. He jerks down his right arm, catching his own right hand and creating a slapping sound.
- (h) Sound signals a return to position (a). (*Etude* is repeated with partners exchanging roles.)

Objectives

Example of Acting Cycle: Preparation, Action, and Point of Repetition. Coordination with partner in changing action tempos. Use of feet and lower trunk movements to establish balance. Division of left and right sides of body. Development of reflex excitability to sound stimulus (h).

Comment

Etude performed at alternating tempos although never as slowly as "Shooting the Bow."

4 The Stab with the Dagger

- (a) Two actors face each other at a distance of six feet. They execute a *dactyl*.
- (b) His open hands behind his back, the first actor bends his legs and jumps up before his partner, who slightly recoils backwards.
- (c) Landing on his right foot which is on a 45° angle to his partner, the actor clenches both hands.
- (d) With his weight on his right foot, the first actor draws an imaginary dagger from an imaginary sheath held in his left fist, forming an arc which crosses his face at a 45° angle and ends to the right and over his head.
- (e) Very slowly, he begins to plunge the dagger into the space occupied by the recoiling body of his partner. As the first actor initiates his stabbing motion, his weight is shifted to his left foot, and his upper left and center torso is forward. The partner, whose legs are well established with the left leg bent and evenly balanced at the foot base and the right foot tensed at the calf and inner area of foot, throws his head back and arcs until he has formed a half bridge, thrusting his arms downward. His shoulders are parallel on a horizontal plane.
- (f) At the extreme point of contact between the partner and imaginary dagger, the partner jerks up with a cry originating from the diaphragm.
- (g) This signals the first actor quickly to withdraw his right arm and body to the original position.



Fig. 9.4 The Stab with the Dagger (e).

Objectives

Example of Acting Cycle. Coordination with partner. Example of automatic psycho/physical states caused by changes in equilibrium and muscular tension (clenched fists, contraction of lower back muscles). Development of strengthening lower trunk for center of balance. Development of reflex excitability from outside sound stimuli (f) + (g).

Comment

Etude performed in extremely alternating tempos.

5 Building the Pyramid

- (a) Two actors stand at a distance of three feet facing each other. They execute a *dactyl*.
- (b) The partner bends his knees, with the left foot forward. He then extends his right leg back and to the right, creating a stable platform between his hip and

left knee. The partner presents his left hand to the first actor, who, taking it in his left, places his left foot on his partner's left lower thigh.

- (c) The right hand of the first actor is grabbed by the partner's right, which is held high over his head.
- (d) As the partner pulls the right hand of the first actor in a wide circle behind the partner's head to the partner's right, the first actor quickly swings his hips to the right, while pushing his left foot against the "platform" and swings his right foot and body up and to the right until his right foot lands on the partner's right shoulder. The partner assists in this action by pushing his hands upward and to his right.
- (e) Facing the same direction as his partner, the first actor pushes his right foot against the partner's right shoulder, and steps up to his left shoulder. He is supported by the upward push from the partner's hands, which are grasped in his own.
- (f) One hand at a time, the partner releases the first actor's hands and uses his to grasp on the first actor's ankles.



Fig. 9.5 Complex Pyramid used in *Roar China* (1926).

- (g) The first actor straightens his body and spreads his arms horizontally, forming a T.
- (h) Once his balance is perfectly established, the first actor bends his knees and claps.
- (i) Swinging his arms back, like a diver, he leaps from his partner's shoulders. He jumps in a diagonal direction to his left.
- (j) In the air, the actor twists his upper torso to the left and his lower torso to the right.
- (k) This torquing action has caused his body to swing around, allowing him to land in his original position, facing his partner at a distance of three feet. His knees are bent.
- (l) First actor performs a *dactyl*. (*Etude* is then repeated with partners exchanging roles.)

Objectives

Practice in rotary motion, torque movements against gravity. Strengthening of wrist, leg, and back muscles. Development of balance in space and on impact. Coordination with partner.

Comment

Essentially a simple acrobatic feat, Meyerhold added numerous steps to this *étude*. In advanced classes, actors performed forward somersaults instead of rotary jumps and built towers and complex pyramids with many partners.

6 Strike with the Feet

- (a) Two actors face each other at a distance of six feet. They execute a *dactyl*.
- (b) The partner with his knees bent and feet pointed slightly inward forms a stable base. With his body slightly forward, he makes taunting sounds at the first actor.



Fig. 9.6 Strike with the Feet (c).

- (c) The first actor, his eyebrows raised and eyes focused on his partner's, slowly lifts his right leg, which is bent at the knee, until it reaches its extreme height. His head is forward. The actor's body is balanced by the weight of his arms, which are tensed at the shoulder and behind his back. The actor's right foot is on a 45° angle to his body.
- (d) Slowly bending his right foot and tilting his body backward, the first actor thrusts his body forward, feet first, at the nose of his partner, whose upper torso recoils.
- (e) Once in the air, the actor kicks his legs up and forward, landing gently on his left shoulder.
- (f) Partner falls backwards to his right side.

Objectives

Development of reflex excitability and response. Establishment of balance on one foot. Movement against gravity. Learning to fall. Coordination with partner.

Comment

Meyerhold claimed that he learned this *étude* from Giovanni di Grasso, the Sicilian actor who visited Russia before the Revolution.

7 The Leap on to the Chest

- (a) Two actors standing at a great distance execute a *dactyl*.
- (b) First actor, running at a great speed, thrusts from his right foot and leaps at his partner, whose balance is firmly fixed.
- (c) In the air, the first actor directs his knees at his partner's chest.
- (d) Landing against his partner, the first actor hooks his elbows behind the partner's shoulders.



Fig. 9.7 The Leap on to the Chest (e).

- (e) The partner leans his upper torso backward to support the weight of the first actor, who holds the back of the partner's neck in his left hand.
- (f) Then, the first actor slowly pulls an imaginary dagger from his belt with his right hand.
- (g) He stabs his partner drawing the imaginary dagger across his throat.
- (h) The partner slowly begins to bend his body backward, and makes a sound as if dying.
- (i) Releasing his grip from the partner's neck, the first actor begins to slide down his partner's body, continually stabbing it with his imaginary dagger.
- (j) They both fall to the floor at the same time.

Objectives

Exercise in precisely estimating distances. Supporting weights against chest cage through positioning of legs. Development of reflex excitability through complex stimuli.

Comment

This *étude* was also inspired by Grasso, who reportedly bit the neck of his partner, drawing blood.

8 Dropping the Weight

- (a) The first actor stands directly behind his partner.
- (b) At the sound of a whistle, the partner draws both of his legs together over the first actor's left foot, forming a perfect vertical.
- (c) The first actor holds the right side of his partner's waist with his right hand and, bending his left elbow, grasps his partner's left hand in his own in the manner of a hand shake.
- (d) Planting a slightly bent right leg to his right side with the foot facing outward, the first actor slowly drops the rigid body of his partner, whose right arm is allowed to swing downwards.



Fig. 9.8 Dropping the Weight (d).

- (e) Keeping his feet in the same position, the first actor drops his partner's body using only the muscular contraction of his thighs.
- (f) When the partner's left hand touches the floor, the action is reversed until the partner is once again vertical.

Objectives

Practicing purely linear movements. Learning to support weights and falling.

9 The Horse and Rider

- (a) At the sound of a whistle, the first actor begins a short run and leaps on the back of his partner, straddling his shoulders and wrapping his arms across his partner's neck.
- (b) Receiving the weight with bended knees, the partner holds on to the first actor's legs and begins to run with a long, carefree, loping stride.
- (c) When the whistle is blown again, he stops in a well-balanced position.
- (d) The whistle is blown for a third time, and the partner begins again to run, turning on a perpendicular axis to his left.
- (e) Sequence continues until two blasts of the whistle are heard.

Objectives

Use of shoulders to support weight. Development of reflex excitability.



Fig. 9.9 The Horse and the Rider (b).

Comment

In advanced classes, many groups of “horses and riders” were drilled in more complex sequences based on alternating tempos and geometric schemes.

Note The drawing seems to illustrate a variation on the standard execution of the *étude*.

10 Tripping Up

- (a) Two actors face each other as in “The Slap in the Face.” They execute a *dactyl*.
- (b) The partner’s hands clench into fists.
- (c) The first actor grasps the partner’s right wrist with his left hand and violently pulls it to the side. This causes the partner’s body to lose its balance as his left foot is jerked off the floor.
- (d) The first actor then pushes the partner’s left side with his right arm, causing his partner to step backward on his left foot.
- (e) The first actor grasps the throat of his partner with his left hand, causing the partner to cry as if wounded.
- (f) That sound signals a return to the original position.
- (g) They execute a *dactyl* and repeat the *étude* after exchanging roles.

Objectives

Development of rhythmic balance. Extremely fast reflex excitability.

11 Carrying the Sack

- (a) From a distance, two actors execute a *dactyl*.
- (b) The first actor, holding an imaginary dagger, pursues his partner.
- (c) Switching his direction, the partner still cannot escape the first actor, who stabs him in the back.
- (d) The partner slowly falls to the floor.
- (e) The first actor bends down to his knees and very slowly lifts his partner’s rigid body.



Fig. 9.10 Carrying the Sack (e).

- (f) Then, suddenly, he throws the body over his shoulder.
- (g) The first actor begins to run wildly in a wide circle.
- (h) He stops and slowly lowers the body.

Objectives

Development of reflex excitability. Exploration of psycho/physical emotional states.

Comment

Etude seems closely to resemble a standard clowning action.

12 The Leap from the Back

- (a) Two actors facing each other execute a *dactyl*.
- (b) The partner turns to the right and squats in a low stable position that is perpendicular to the first actor who, with his arms high in the air, places his right foot on the right side of his partner's back.
- (c) As his partner slowly leans forward, the first actor pushes his left foot against the floor, thrusting his body upward. In a twisting motion with his arms brought down and knees bent, the first actor climbs on the partner's back, facing the same direction as his partner.
- (d) Moving slightly upward and sliding his right foot back and to the right, the partner creates a flat, stable "platform" with his back. With his knees bent, arms behind him, and upper torso bent forward, the first actor calibrates his movements to those of his partner.
- (e) First actor and partner hold a motionless, balanced position.
- (f) At the sound of a whistle, the partner begins to slowly walk forward.
- (g) At the sound of the next whistle, the first actor leaps from his partner's back.

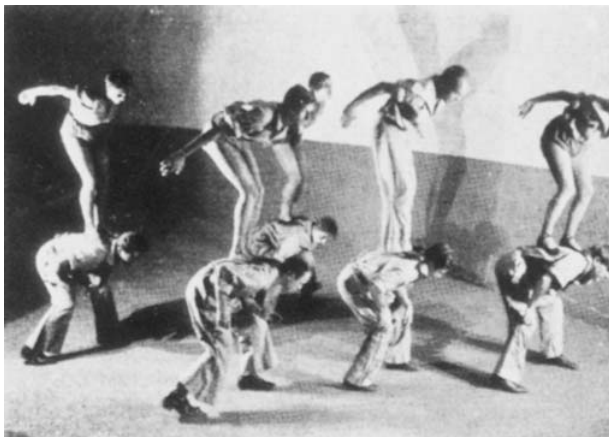


Fig. 9.11 The Leap from the Back (e).

Objectives

Development of many forms of balance and reflex excitability. Coordination with partner.

Comment

In advanced classes, Meyerhold added other steps such as forward somersaults instead of simple leaps and jumping from one back to another.

13 The Circle

- (a) A number of actors in multiples of three perform a *dactyl*.
- (b) They march around the room in a circle with long loping strides.
- (c) At the sound of a whistle, the second actor of each threesome places his hands on the first actor's shoulders. The third actor leaps forward landing on his hands and one knee on the platform created by the first two actors.
- (d) With each change in music tempo, the third actor executes a different balanced position on the shoulders of the first two actors, who are marching in stride.
- (e) In the final balanced position, the third actor sits on the arms of the second actor.
- (f) At the sound of a whistle, the third actor leans forward grasping the shoulders of the first as the second actor slides his hands away from the shoulder of the first actor. This allows the third actor to land in an upright position in the march.
- (g) The three actors continue to march until the whistle is blown.



Fig. 9.12 The Circle (c).

Objectives

Development of many forms of balance. Reflex excitability. Coordination with many partners. Supporting weights on the back and arms.



Fig. 9.13 The Circle (e).

10

ETIENNE DECROUX'S PROMETHEAN MIME

Deidre Sklar

Even if his work does not turn out to be the principal, central theatrical work of our time, it can resemble the work of some small, strict holy order from which the whole church benefits.

(Eric Bentley 1953)

Eric Bentley, reviewing a Corporeal Mime performance by Etienne Decroux and his company, recognized the value of Decroux's work but also its strangeness. Jean-Louis Barrault, who helped Decroux to formulate the principles of Corporeal Mime in the 1920s, called him a puritan revolutionary who cultivated the more-than-perfect. During my own apprenticeship with Decroux in Paris from September 1967 through December 1968, a legend circulated about how Decroux used to stop performances to repeat a passage until he got it perfect. This kind of stage behavior did nothing for Decroux's popularity with audiences. The feeling was mutual. Concerned less with entertainment than with purity of execution, Decroux eventually refused to perform for more than a small and select group of friends. His ultimate concern has been pedagogic rather than performative; his goal has been to train actors to be in perfect control of their bodies.

While Bentley's idea of a cloistered holy order accurately describes Decroux's iconoclasm, it misrepresents his message. Shunning religion, Decroux claims that "[m]ime is a political art, but not political in the way that some would like me to say it is – in the way of Trotskyism, Stalinism, or anarchy. It is political or Promethean as opposed to religious" (Decroux 1978). When Decroux calls his art Promethean, he is claiming the right to rebel against the limitations of the body and against socially accepted esthetic images. "I don't want to stay as I am," he writes. "I want to become what I desire to be" (1963). The ideal of the Promethean actor who is more beautiful than the one God made is the image underlying Decroux's Corporeal Mime.

Promethean art [is] an art in which man does things. Man was not content to live in a

cave. He is the rival of God in that he makes things. He makes statues. It's as if he said to God, "The man you made is not beautiful. I'm going to make another. The cave you made is not beautiful. I'll make a monument."

(Decroux 1978)

Prometheus is for Decroux what anthropologist Sherry B. Ortner calls a summarizing key symbol. A summarizing key symbol condenses a network of ideas and beliefs into one image, which then stands for the whole complex. In the Greek myth, Prometheus challenged the Olympian gods by stealing the fire of sun and lightning. He gave this "raw" heavenly fire to human beings as "cooked" or domesticated hearth fire. Since it enables cooking, heating, smelting and other industry, domesticated fire separates humans from animals. Because the use of fire suggests that humans must work to live, it separates us from gods who do not. Symbolizing reason, artifice, culture, labor and suffering, Prometheus' gift thus defines the human condition.

In an alternate Roman version of the myth, Prometheus creates mankind out of clay after the Olympians have decided to abolish the human race. In either version, Prometheus defies the gods, creates or re-creates the human race and is punished for his defiance. Likewise for Decroux, human beings must perpetually struggle and inevitably suffer as a result of their actions. The key themes of self-creation, rebellious and heroic action, struggling and suffering, manual labor and choice based on reason form the core of Decroux's world view, esthetic and physical technique.

This idea was popular in nineteenth century European thought. Goethe in his Prometheus poem addresses Zeus:

Here I sit, shaping man
After my image,
A race that is like me,
To suffer, to weep,
To rejoice and be glad,
And like myself
To have no regard for you!

Goethe's Prometheus is the "immortal prototype of man as the original rebel and affirmer of his fate" (Kerenyi 1963). Similarly, Nietzsche sees Prometheus as the titanic individual or *übermensch*. He writes in *The Birth of Tragedy* that "what distinguishes the Aryan conception is the notion of active sin as the properly Promethean virtue." This active sin is uniquely masculine as opposed to the feminine Biblical sin of suggestibility. Promethean *hubris* is necessary for Nietzsche's titanic individual who purchases his own heroic suffering.

For Decroux, as for Nietzsche, the Promethean actor instigates action and purchases suffering. When Decroux writes about action, the verb he uses is not *faire*, which is "to do" in the sense of "make." He uses *agir*, which is "to do" in the sense of "agitate." "No longer hesitating before taking action, man anguishes in action," Decroux writes. Suffering is Decroux's "subject of subjects" (1963). He claims for his art the right to paint portraits of life in black, to depict sorrow the way the great dramatists, sculptors and poets have done.

One must live, one must suffer, and one must struggle before expressing oneself artistically. One must have something to say. Art is first of all a complaint. One who is happy with things as they are has no business being on the stage.

(Decroux 1978)

Like Prometheus chained to the cliff or like a “butterfly nailed alive to the board” (Decroux 1963), the Corporeal Mime actor expresses the contradiction between what we are and what we would like to be. This opposition between aspiration and limitation is exemplified in the physical technique. The foot, “proletarian of the esthetic,” stays rooted to the ground while the upper body fights against the pull of gravity to perform expressive attitudes. Unlike the dancer who, according to Decroux, is “free and soaring,” the Corporeal Mime actor is “struggling and earthbound.” Unlike dance, the kinesphere of Corporeal Mime action tends to be limited; rarely does the actor traverse large distances in space. He is like a “Greek statue changing form under a glass bell” (1963).

Paralleling the struggle between upper and lower body, in Corporeal Mime a relationship of tension is maintained between adjacent body parts. For example, in order to achieve the position shown in Figures 10.1 and 10.2, the chest bends while the waist struggles to remain upright. This means that the muscles of the waist exert a contradictory pull in the opposite direction to the chest. Similarly, to achieve a smooth backward curve of the spine, the chest must be trained to bend more than its natural inclination, while the waist is trained to curb its naturally large capacity for bending.

In addition to the opposition maintained between parts of the body, struggle is expressed in Corporeal Mime through general muscular tension. Tension and release create the dynamics of movement. Decroux’s concept of *dynamo rythme* combines duration and speed with degrees of muscular tension. The results are somewhat similar to Rudolf Laban’s Effort qualities. For example, the two most basic *dynamo rythmes* are the *secousse* and the *fondue*, or the shock and the sustain. In the *secousse*, force-in-place is generated by tensing the muscles and then releasing them in a powerful and quick movement. Like a note held on the violin, the *fondue* involves continual slow movement at constant velocity with a constant degree of muscular tension. Either dynamic can be performed with the whole body or with any isolated part. Decroux illustrates the combination of *secousse* and *fondue* with the image of a fish which first darts and then glides.

“The Antenna of the Snail,” an important exercise that was performed frequently while I was a student of Decroux, demonstrates the principle of *dynamo rythme*. It begins with the tensing of the neck muscles. The head then turns slowly as the tension is released. As the head reaches the 45° angle, the neck tenses again, causing the head to rotate back in the opposite direction. The tension and recoil imitate the sensitive snail’s antennae as they near an obstacle, vibrate and recoil.

The struggle symbolized by Prometheus and enacted in Corporeal Mime technique is also reflected in Decroux’s political philosophy. In spite of his denial that he embraced any one political system over another, Decroux characterizes himself as having a “socialist temperament.” He explains that he is moved by the struggles of people, the spirit filtered through stone (as in statuary), large masses gathered around large monuments or sports events, singing choirs, processions and group protests.

A revolution is constructive. It's active. It rises up. It takes energy to make a revolution of whatever kind. And one must suffer for that. A revolution is not a liberation from chains, it's a changing of chains. It consists of breaking with obligations, that seem bad, and adopting other obligations that seem better. I would even say that liberty is the right to choose one's restraints. That's what liberty is.

(Lust 1974)

Decroux was particularly inspired by the Russian Revolution. "One felt that at the moment Russia was not falling but rising up," he said (1978). The idea of "rising up" corresponds with Decroux's image of the Promethean actor.

When an actor in shorts is lying on the ground, it's a whole nation lying down. And when he slowly rises up, you see the play of his muscles. After that he comes and goes, lifts things, throws them. He's self-reliant man, and there's his rapport with Promethean art.

(Decroux 1978)

A simple exercise demonstrates the transition from inaction to "rising up," or from mental sleep to wakefulness.

- 1 You sit in a chair. You are asleep.
- 2 Still sleeping, you stir. The head shifts to center.
- 3 The eyes open, but you do not see.
- 4 You see, but do not register what you see.
- 5 Registering what you see, your interest is aroused.
- 6 You take action; stand.

For Decroux, the human struggle to rise up is epitomized in activities of manual labor and sports. The sight of the lightweight boxing champion Georges Carpentier first inspired Decroux to devote himself to an esthetics of the body. At 15, Carpentier was small, strong and beautiful. His "vigor and grace; force, elegance, flash and thoughtfulness; a taste for risk and for the smile" became an esthetic ideal for Decroux (1963).

"Mime is the champion of manual laborers," Decroux wrote in *Paroles sur le Mime*. The muscular action of manual labor and sports provides the subject matter for many of Decroux's pieces, such as *The Carpenter*, *The Washer Woman*, *Ancient Combat*, *The Factory*, *The Discus Thrower* and others. Actions such as sustained force, shocks of effort, resistances and counterweights underlie even those pieces that are not concerned with manual labor or sports. Like the laborer's work, the technique demands strength, endurance, force, weightiness and sustained energy. For Decroux, the worker's or athlete's movements are harmonious, logical, efficient and beautiful. When the actor moves with the harmony, logic and efficiency of the worker or athlete, Decroux finds him *beau*. The Corporeal Mime must be an "esthetician who is also a carpenter" (Decroux 1978).

Born in 1898, Decroux had worked as a mason, a hospital orderly, a factory worker and a dock worker before he was 25. He enrolled at Jacques Copeau's Ecole du Vieux Colombier at the age of 25 in preparation for a career in political oratory. Without losing his political orientation, Decroux became a man of the theatre. As Annette Lust, an ex-student of Decroux, writes, "All Decroux's political passions – rigorous, idealistic and visionary – were transferred to the theatre" (Lust 1974). Decroux's home and studio are now in the Boulogne-Billancourt district of Paris,

an area distinguished for its car factories and revolutionary politics. Thus, in his life as well as his art, Decroux has remained close to the worker.

Decroux's Promethean actor, self-created in his own image, rebellious against the gods, rising up with political passion in the name of humanity and firmly grounded in the esthetics of manual labor, acts according to the laws of reason. The "chains" Decroux chooses are the rules of rational thinking. The hero's struggle to create himself is equivalent to the mime's struggle to rule the body according to the mind's will. The mind is free, according to Decroux. It can move at constant speed, slow down, speed up, stop or change direction at will. It can take precarious jumps, return to review an idea or hold one in abeyance while examining another. It is not limited in time, space or the mechanics of the body. Therefore, we "want the body to regulate its step to that of thought" (1963).

I desire theatre in which the actor . . . is an instrumentalist of his own body, and everything he does, he does as an artist, and not just as an exposition of his personal nature.

(Decroux 1978)

By contrast, the actor whose actions are based on impulse or emotion is embarrassing or ridiculous to Decroux. The actor's personal nature manifests itself spontaneously and easily in facial expressions and hand gestures, according to Decroux; therefore, face and hand gestures must be suppressed.

If I've been impressed by all the arts, if not equally impressed by all of them, there is one that frankly displeases me. And that is pantomime. Pantomime: that play of face and hands which seemed to try to explain something but lacked the needed words. I detested this form.

(Decroux 1974)

For Decroux, it is the trunk, the largest and most difficult part of the body to articulate, that expresses what is universal. Large movements of the trunk demonstrate a "hunger to speak to people," and therefore Decroux gives them primacy over the hands and face.

Like Edward Gordon Craig, Decroux sought to rid the theatre of the actor's personal idiosyncrasies. Craig thought the director's will and spirit could be most faithfully represented by the marionette-actor. Decroux disagreed, saying that the human body is more suitable than the puppet for expressing life's struggle. Still, Decroux's ideal actor – unhampered by stage paraphernalia and ruling his body by will and reason the way a puppeteer manipulates a marionette – owes much to Craig's genius.

Geometry is the substance of reason for Decroux. To have the body "regulate its step to that of thought" means that all movement must be inspired by geometric principles. The body segments must be isolated and "played" like a keyboard.

What exactly have I done? One day a student of mine said to me, "The day you said 'head without neck' you found your whole system." I wouldn't have thought of that definition, but I think that's it: the head without the neck, the neck without the chest, the chest without the waist, the waist without the pelvis, the pelvis without the legs . . . So we consider the keyboard as something that should inspire us. Nothing should happen in the body except what is desired and calculated.

(Decroux 1978)

Head, neck, chest, waist, pelvis and legs can be isolated and “played” in three dimensions – sagittal (side-to-side) inclinations, frontal (back-and-forth) inclinations and rotations. Each part is trained to move in all three ways and in combinations called single, double and triple designs (*dessins*). A single design is movement on one plane or dimension; a double design is in two dimensions; and a triple design is in three dimensions. For example, if the head leans to the left, or if head, neck, chest and waist all incline left, this is a single design. If the head leans right and then rotates in either direction, it is a double design. If it leans right, bends forward and then rotates right, the head creates a triple design. Figure 10.1 shows a triple design in which head, neck, and chest have rotated right, inclined right and inclined back. Figure 10.2 shows the head, neck and chest rotated right, inclined right and inclined forward. The resulting combinations, or attitudes, can be arrived at by moving each part separately or all at once. Moving from one attitude to another, the Corporeal Mime actor creates an itinerary (*itinéraire*) or moving statuary (*statuaire mobile*).

This kind of abstract geometric analysis is also applied to everyday actions. For example, to throw a ball with the left arm, the Corporeal Mime moves into the position of head, neck, and chest rotated right, inclined right and inclined back. To release the ball, the attitude is reversed into the position of rotation left, inclination left and inclination forward. The arm simply “echoes” the movement of the chest, preparing to throw on the first move, extending on the second. Decroux applies this kind of geometric analysis to a range of everyday actions from sitting down on a chair to pushing a cart or sweeping the floor.

Decroux’s concept of the rational actor who rules his body with his will is epitomized in his work on the *Meditation*, an improvisation piece whose subject is reasoning itself. The improvisation begins with a transition from vacuity to wakefulness similar to the preparatory exercise that has been described. In the *Meditation*, however, the actor begins standing and distills the entire sequence into one instant of transition from inaction to attention. This moment represents the awakening of thought.

Thought awakens in the eyes and head. The head then begins an investigation, a research of logical movement possibilities. For example, if the head inclines to the right, it then returns to rectilinear and repeats the movement, or it executes a symmetrical inclination to the left. The neck follows to the right or else contradicts the head and inclines to the left. The choices are limited by the logic of geometry.

Growing interest produces expanded physical involvement. The chest is pulled into action. Perhaps the head and neck explored only the sagittal plane, and now a second “idea,” originating in the head, pulls the neck and chest into an exploration of the frontal plane. The possibilities of two dimensions are explored. The chest must be able to move with as much force and weight as the head. Normally fused to the waist, it struggles to articulate while the waist stays fixed.

Perhaps the head has led the neck and chest into an inclination to the left and forward. Holding this “idea,” it begins a new exploration in rotation, still inclined to the left and forward. Continuing to rotate, the waist is engaged, and finally, pulling the legs and hips to an extreme rotation, a new plateau is reached, a new starting point.

The search begins again. The head starts out in a new direction, following a new thought, constructing a new geometrical design. An itinerary begins to

unfold, a map carved out by the moving statuary. Seeking a harmonious line, a uniformity of execution, obedience to the logic of mind, the body struggles to keep step with thought. Moments of stillness are juxtaposed with moments of shock and reverberation. An action may repeat and accelerate, then unfold in a new direction. It is like an animal searching for food or a Greek statue transforming in stone. The whole process has taken perhaps three, perhaps ten, minutes.

The *Meditation* can also be performed as a group piece, and it is then called *Research Scientists in a Laboratory*. The principles are the same as for the solo *Meditation*, except that while “thinking,” each person is expected to respond to all the other “scientists.” For example, person A might be exploring an inclination to the right and bump her head against the chest of person B who is in the middle of a descent to the ground. Both would be expected to incorporate the interference. B might join A’s inclination, and the two would continue inclining together to the right. Perhaps B would receive A’s head in the hollow of his waist, or he might recoil from the contact and set out on an entirely new exploration. In this way the entire group would be constantly in and out of interaction.

The *Meditation* and *Research Scientists in a Laboratory* can be performed as concert pieces or, in the studio, as demonstrations of the students’ mastery of Corporeal Mime principles and technique. While I was a student, although we practiced the group piece for a year, we performed only at weekly Friday night improvisation sessions for other students and under Decroux’s critical surveillance. These Friday night performances are highly charged in-group events that substitute for public performance.

In the basement studio, students set up a semi-circle of folding chairs facing a table and chair where Decroux will sit. He appears wearing his red and blue velour robe and formally greets the students. Sitting at the table, he delivers a talk on some aspect of Corporeal Mime philosophy, such as the difference between mime and dance or the subject of the “thinking” mime. After Decroux’s talk, table and chair are removed and students improvise in hierarchical order – the newcomers first, and the *anciens* last. While students are sometimes asked to improvise on other themes, the primary subject while I was a student was the *Meditation* or its group version, *Research Scientists in a Laboratory*. Decroux’s responses can be ecstatic or scalding. His most scathing comments are reserved for people who try to be spontaneous or clever, or who try to express themselves emotionally.

Only students are permitted to observe the Friday night improvisations, except for one regular visitor: an older woman who sat silent in the corner and sketched the proceedings. Both performers and audience are therefore initiates, so to speak, in Corporeal Mime. All share an understanding of the specialized vocabulary and underlying theoretical principles of the form. When students are not performing, they are scrutinizing and evaluating each other’s work. The separation between skilled performer and non-skilled spectator that characterizes most European theatre is absent.

In the absence of public performance, Friday night sessions are like formalized rituals of initiation into Decroux’s esoteric order. Richard Schechner distinguishes between preparation and rehearsal in the theatre, saying that the more attention paid to the preparation rather than rehearsal, the closer theatre comes to ritual.

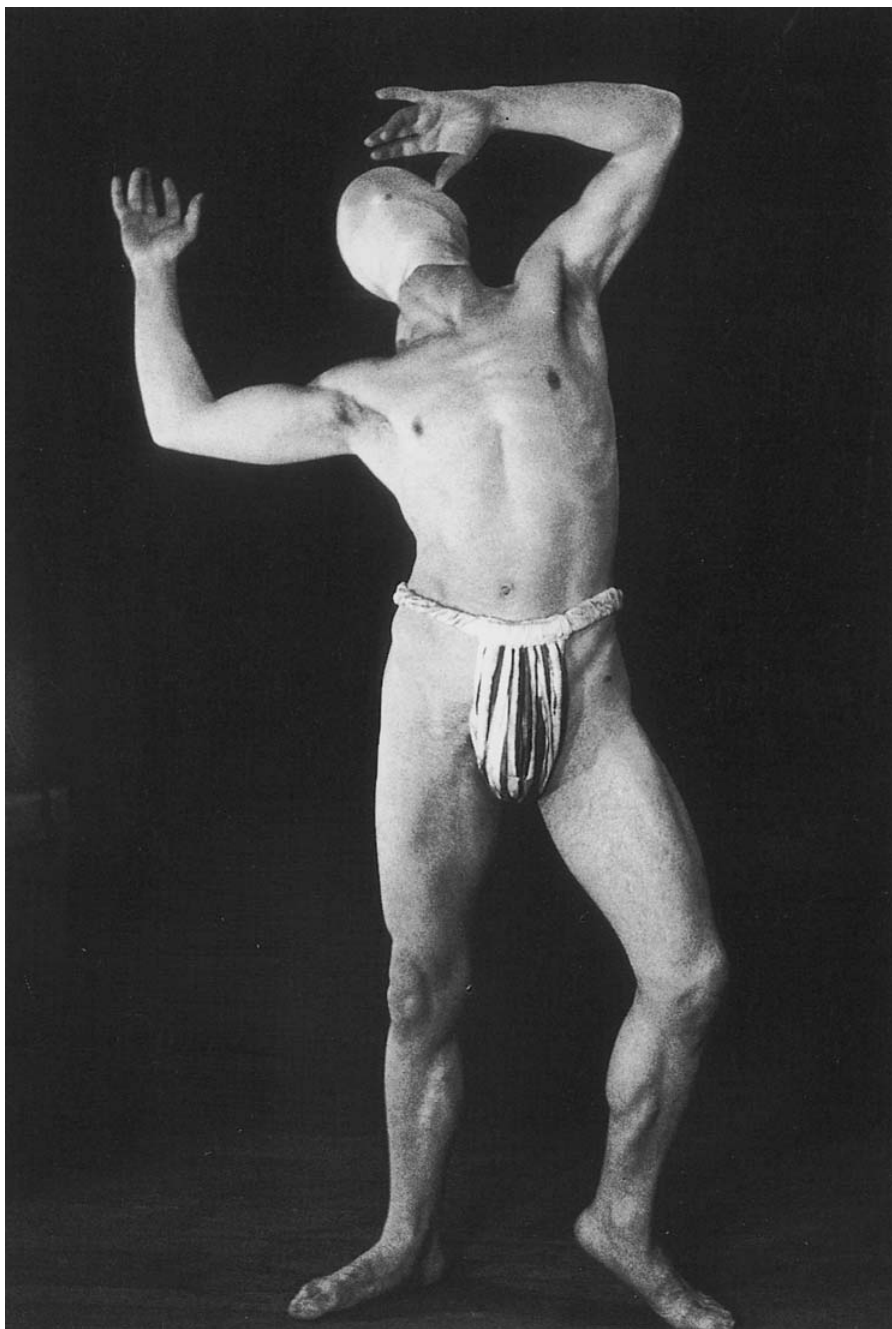


Fig. 10.1 Decroux's Promethean Mime.

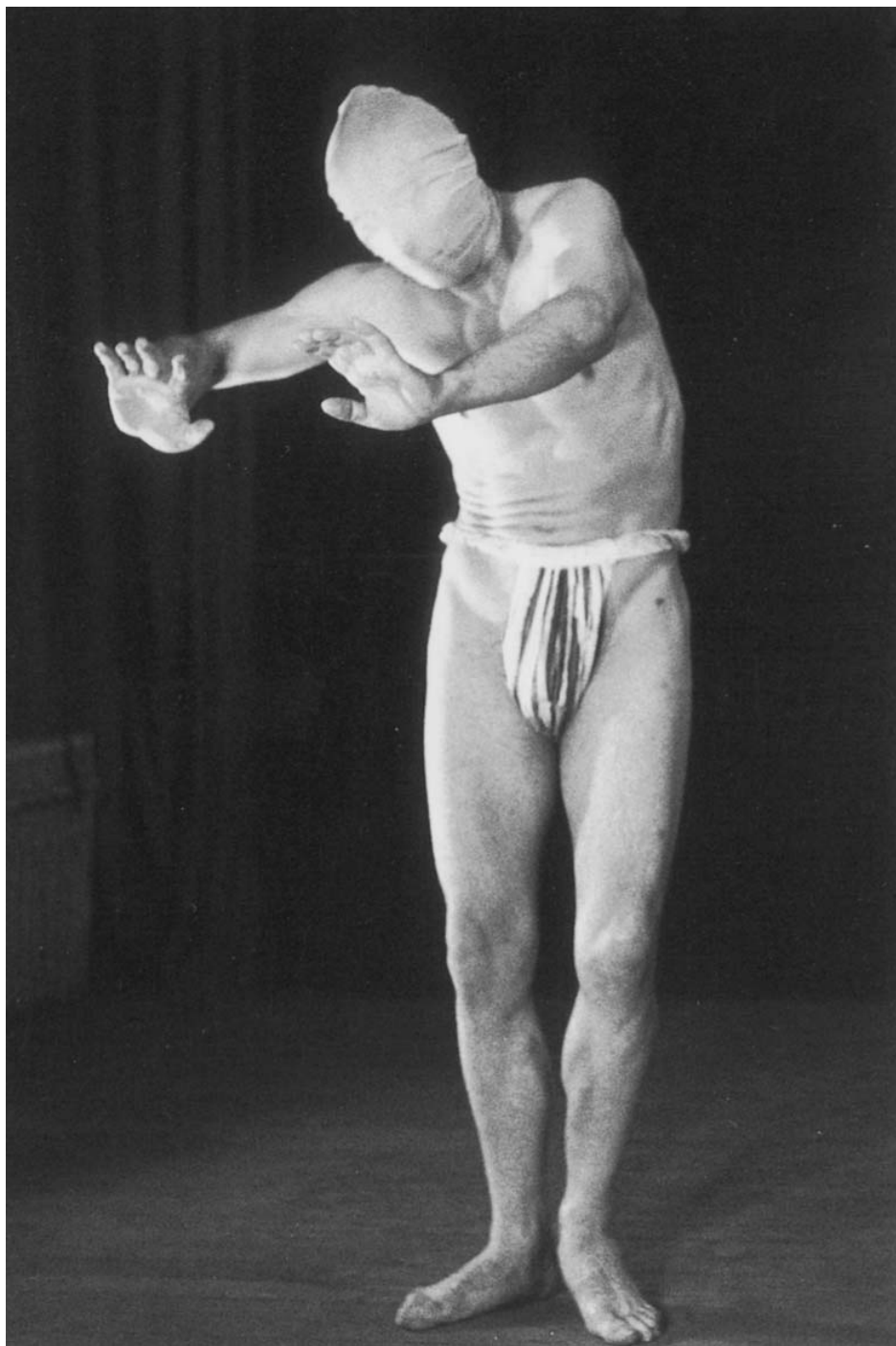


Fig. 10.2 Decroux's Promethean Mime.

Rehearsal is a way of setting an exact sequence of events. Preparations are a constant state of training so that when a situation arises one will be ready to “do something appropriate.” Preparations are what a good athletic team does.

(Schechner 1977)

Weekday classes in technique prepare students to “do something appropriate” at Friday night improvisations. Schechner also suggests that the more the audience is integrated into the performance, the closer theatre comes to ritual. Both the criteria of preparation versus rehearsal and that of integration of the audience into the event apply to the Friday night performances in Decroux’s studio. Decroux’s system of codified communication is itself a kind of ritualization, a transformation of natural sequences of behavior into composed sequences.

Not only Corporeal Mime technique and Friday night improvisation sessions but Decroux’s lifestyle and pedagogical style suggest ritual and initiation into an esoteric order. Entering Decroux’s home is like walking into another era. He refuses to accept normative technological life. After students knock on the front door, Madame Decroux ushers them into the kitchen where she has been cooking or doing the wash by hand. The smell of French cheeses and pastries comes from under glass covers. Students must remove their shoes and place them under the stove before ascending the stairs to the second floor drawing-room to change clothes.

If Decroux has not already emerged to greet students in the kitchen, he now rings a brass hand-bell signaling students to file back down through the kitchen and down another flight of stairs to the basement studio. There he formally greets each one, offering his hand to the men, sometimes kissing the women’s eyes, or embracing men and women alike.

Greetings are followed by an elaborate and prescribed ritual of handing out four-foot-long ropes. (From 1973 to 1978 Decroux replaced the rope ritual with another in which students had to pull him across the floor on his buttocks. Apparently, this was a serious joke about his age: he was over 80.) One by one, students approach Decroux. Holding the ropes by one end in his left hand, he transfers them one at a time to his right hand and steps forward toward a student, who at the same time steps forward to receive the rope. The exact movement of arm, hand and chest are codified and must show respect. If performed improperly, the entire sequence must be repeated. Once the ropes are all handed out, Decroux and the class perform the exercise called *Statuette d’Automobile* 25 times. This exercise establishes the correct body position for all subsequent work.

Decroux teaches by modeling the figures of Corporeal Mime, the moving statuary, counterweights, walks, turns and studies of everyday movement. While he explains the principles, tells jokes and stories and demonstrates movement, students are told to sit down. Then, at Decroux’s signal, everyone gets up to imitate what he has done. Decroux sings an accompanying *dynamo rythme* and scrutinizes execution of the movement. He may then single out a student to perform the movement next to him or next to an *ancien*. The rest of the class must compare the two versions and point out differences. These critiques develop the capacity for minute observation and awareness of the fine points of technique.

Comparison between students clarifies the hierarchy of the classroom. *Anciens* who have been with Decroux for several years are models for the others. Among those who have been with Decroux a year or less, rank depends upon both skill and

promise, which includes seriousness about studying, respect for Corporeal Mime and a strong and graceful body. Students who show promise and remain long enough to master the rudiments of technique are invited to join the *équipe*.

Decroux's *équipe*, while I was a student, consisted of seven to ten students who shared Decroux's research work in daily three-hour sessions (and twice on Thursdays). In addition, they attend the hour-and-a-half daily classes for all students. An invitation to join the *équipe* is considered a privilege and is taken very seriously by Decroux, his wife and the students. In my own case, I was warned several times by Madame Decroux that skipping classes was jeopardizing my chances for an invitation. When my attendance improved, I was asked to join.

Once inside the inner circle, although the hierarchical ordering of students continues, the tension releases and research goes on in a less formal atmosphere. Research includes analyzing new movement sequences, learning choreography, and revising and perfecting Decroux's repertory of abstract and representational movement sequences. In addition, the *équipe* works on the group improvisation, *Research Scientists in a Laboratory* and new pieces that are based on the body types and personalities of the members. The *équipe* was in the process of preparing for a public performance when it disbanded.

The disbanding came as a result of clashing values. The *ancien* of the group announced his intention to leave for several months to study with Jerzy Grotowski in Poland. This broke the rules inherent in Decroux's "holy order." Decroux denounces what he calls the "5 and 10" approach to art in which students sample bits and pieces of many techniques. He expects students to train exclusively with him in the old European master-apprentice system and then remain with him as journeymen after they have completed their apprenticeship. The *ancien's* announcement was deplorable and unforgivable to Decroux. The announcement occurred during the 1968 "revolution" in Paris, and after Decroux had forbidden the young man to return to his studio, the others declared "solidarity" with the renegade. In spite of attempts to assure Decroux that no disrespect was intended, outbursts and recriminations followed. Several students eventually returned to classes, but the *équipe* fragmented, and no public performance was ever given.

Corporeal Mime is not a secret study, yet it has never been a popular form. Decroux's "puritan revolutionary" personality discourages the merely curious, and his art seems esoteric to many. Decroux's "small, strict holy order" remains outside the mainstream because he is less concerned with entertaining spectators than with transforming students – mind and body – into his image of the Promethean actor or ideal Everyman. This ideal is achieved through mastery of the physical technique of Corporeal Mime and through assimilating its theoretical principles. Students who remain with Decroux long enough to master the system have undergone a deconstruction and reconstruction process that more closely resembles ritual initiation than theatre.

ACTOR TRAINING IN THE NEUTRAL MASK

Sears A. Eldredge and Hollis W. Huston

During the First World War, in Paris Jacques Copeau developed the idea of a severe and simple form of theatre, neither classical nor topical, but versatile through the economy of its means. In 1919 he remodeled the stage of the Vieux-Columbier in accordance with his new ideas, and over the next two years he founded a school for the training of actors, the Ecole du Vieux Columbier. Both in design and in acting, Copeau wanted to make large statements with simple gestures. The pursuit of simplicity made him eliminate distractions, to create the still ground against which a movement or a form could be seen. His bare architectural stage was meant to magnify the evanescent statements of the drama. "I want the stage to be naked and neutral," he wrote, "in order that every delicacy may appear there, in order that every fault may stand out; in order that the dramatic work may have a chance in this neutral atmosphere to fashion that individual garment which it knows how to put on" (in Sergeant 1917). The simplicity that Copeau sought required a neutral atmosphere.

Copeau built that atmosphere into the theatrical space of the Vieux-Columbier, but to realize it in the spaces and rhythms of the actor's body was another, less tangible problem. The actor would have to be stripped as bare as the stage; only then could he express himself clearly and simply. Otherwise, the movement would be lost against a ground of temperament or convention. To find the neutral atmosphere within himself, therefore, the actor would first have to give up deeply ingrained but superficial habits. "The actor always starts from an artificial *attitude*, a bodily, mental, or vocal *grimace*. His attack is both too deliberated and insufficiently premeditated" (Copeau 1970). The starting point was to be not an attitude but a silence serving as a resting state, a condition without motion but filled with energy, like the condition of a runner in the moment before his race. All impulses were to arise from that state and return to it. "To start from silence and calm. That is the very first point. An actor must know how to be silent, to listen, to answer, to remain motionless, to start a gesture, follow through with it, come back to motionlessness and silence, with all the shadings and half-tones that these actions imply" (1970).

To lead actors into familiarity with a neutral atmosphere in their own bodies, Copeau assigned his students to work with masks. In Copeau's use of the mask to rid the actor of temperamental habits, Etienne Decroux found the germ of his severe and abstractive corporeal mime. Decroux noticed that the mask reveals the personality of the wearer. In common-place actions as well as dramatic ones, the actor's idiosyncratic way of moving tended to drown the movement itself; under the mask *how* becomes more important than *what*. "So we're relying on masks to fix things up, are we? But it's just the contrary! Masks make things worse. . . . It's like lightning. We see everything you do clearly. And the moment you wear a mask, especially [a neutral] mask, we see the quality of what you're doing" (in Leabhart 1975). If the mask could reveal the "attitude" or "grimace" that controlled the untrained actor, then it could also amplify and objectify the "neutral atmosphere" when the actor found it. Therefore, the neutral mask became an important tool for Copeau and for a later generation of teachers.

Copeau's school did not survive, but the influence of his mask training has been carried on in two main channels. One of those channels was defined by Michael Saint-Denis, Copeau's nephew; the other, by Jacques Lecoq, who trained under Jean Daste, Copeau's son-in-law, from 1945 to 1947. Teachers from both traditions have worked in or founded actor training programs in the United States. The Saint-Denis teaching stresses the actor's service to text, and uses only character masks, though some of those are closer to neutrality than others. Lecoq's teaching, on the other hand, is concerned in its initial phase with matters that precede speech and character. Before wearing character masks, Lecoq's students are made familiar with the *masque neutre*, which is designed to rid them of conditioned attitudes in favor of an economical use of the body. More than any other person, Lecoq has defined the neutral state for the performer, as it is realized in masks.

NEUTRALITY

Jacques Lecoq speaks of the neutral mask as tending toward a "fulcrum point which doesn't exist." As the actor approaches this fixed point, he becomes "a blank sheet of paper, a 'tabula rasa.'"¹ For Bari Rolfe, "the two words, 'appropriate' and 'economical' together almost add up to the term 'neutral.' The student executes any action, like walking, with only the expenditure of energy and rhythm, in space and in time, that the action requires" (Rolfe 1972). Richard Hayes-Marshall speaks of neutrality as "a condition such that, if the actor finds himself there, he doesn't know what he will do next. . . . When you are there, you don't know what it is; if you did, it wouldn't be neutral." Andrew Hepburn writes that "Neutrality means responding to stimuli in a *purely sensory* way."

A neutral organism expends only the energy required by the task at hand. Personalities expend that amount of energy and something else besides; personalities are distinguished from each other by the nature of what they add. *Therefore, to be a personality, to be oneself even, is not to be neutral.* Yet one cannot avoid being oneself. An actor can hope to perform a neutral action, but he cannot be neutral – neutral is a "fulcrum point that doesn't exist." To approach neutral action, one must lose oneself, denying one's own attitudes or intentions. At the moment of neutral action, one does not know what one will do next, because anticipation is a

mark of personality; one cannot describe how one feels because introspection intrudes on simplicity; one reacts in a sensory way, because when the mind stops defining experience, the senses still function. Economy demands that both motion and rest be unpremeditated. Neutral activity withholds nothing; it is an energized condition, like the moment of inspiration before speech. The neutrality that the mask seeks is *an economy of mind and body, evidenced at rest, in motion, and in the relationship between them.*

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MASKS

The personality of the maskmaker threatens the neutrality of the mask. One must devote many trials and experiments to the research of neutrality. Hayes-Marshall has redesigned his neutral masks seven times. "There is no such thing as a neutral mask," he says, "it has to be designed by somebody."

Neutral masks are at rest: they do not gesture, frown, smile, or grimace. The masks are symmetrical. Though the neutral mask is never used for speaking, the lips are lightly parted, as if the mask were about to speak. The masks are usually designed in pairs, male and female. Since the male and female bodies have different centers of gravity, the masks that will be carried by them must also differ. The leather mask designed for Lecoq by Sartori is brown, but celastic or papier mâché masks used in other studios are often white. A white mask reflects light well, and therefore shows its expression clearly; brown masks, on the other hand, are closer in appearance to skin tones. Leather is the best material for simulating the textures of living skin, but there are few people capable of making leather masks. Amleto Sartori of Padua reconstructed the craft from Renaissance sources, and made neutral, expressive and *commedia* masks of leather for Lecoq and for Carlo Mazzone-Clementi. His son Donato carries on the work today, but the masks are expensive and slow to produce. Papier mâché or celastic masks are easier and cheaper.

Styles of sculpting vary according to the amount of personality considered proper in the mask. The Sartori mask used by Lecoq, which is dominated by a pair of sharp lines that define the nose and continue upward to form the brow line, seems to some observers rather abstract. The Hepburn mask is softer in outline and more naturalistic: detailed contours in the nose, eyes, cheeks, and brows, give an impression of flesh and muscle. The tragic masks of the Saint-Denis tradition, which are used for some of the same purposes as the neutral mask, are simple and harmonious masks that represent the four ages of man (Saint-Denis 1969). At the extreme of abstraction is the metaphysical mask of Mazzone-Clementi (Figure 11.1). The metaphysical mask is defined only by a centerline, a browline, and one circular and one triangular eyehole. An abstract mask leads the actor beyond psychology to the intrinsic qualities of movements and body shapes. A personalized mask is less remote from dramatic characterization.

EXERCISES FOR THE ACTOR USING THE NEUTRAL MASK

Most teachers of the mask believe that training should be a *via negativa*: they will not tell the student what to do, but they will point out mistakes after they have been made. "By blocking the path taken by the actor," writes Rolfe, "you oblige him to look for another. . . . Each restriction placed on the actor forces his imagination



Fig. 11.1 Carlo Mazzone-Clementi's metaphysical mask.

to seek ways to get around it" (1972). The teacher cannot provide a model or a set of rules. The student must look for the condition of neutrality within himself. Since bodies are unique, each person's neutrality is his own: there is no single pattern. Hayes-Marshall says that "if a student's work creates fire, I'm not interested in saying it's not fire." Yet in the pursuit of neutrality, a lapse into psychology is perceived as an error. To see such lapses, and to train his students to see them, the teacher must have experienced them in himself.

A period of training, often as long as a year, is required before students attempt the mask. The training period is devoted to acrobatics and conditioning, to developing an awareness of the body's articulations and of the images that the body can project into space. The mask then becomes a way of learning the meaning of those articulations and images.

Most teachers introduce the mask with a talk on its design and significance. Then the actor studies the mask: at the Ecole Lecoq, that study lasts for eight days. The

moment of putting on the mask is crucial, since the body will immediately begin to accept or reject the mask. The actor may feel the urge to impose a movement or a body image, but he must inhibit that urge, allowing his own thoughts, his breathing, and his stance, to be replaced by those of the mask. Lecoq does not allow his students to view themselves in a mirror at this point, but some teachers find that the mirror can help a student see the change in his condition. The mask is treated with the respect due to a human face. It is handled by the sides or by top and bottom; one never grabs it by the nose or places the hand over its eyes. There is no speaking in the neutral mask; if the student needs to say something, he must first raise the mask onto the forehead.

The first exercises begin from sleep, the most fundamental of resting states. The study of neutrality starts with simple activities such as standing, walking, sitting, or picking up an object, as performed in the mask. The first level of error is gratuitous movement. In walking, one student will bounce, another will sway, another will take extra steps after the forward movement has stopped; one will look at the ceiling, another will look at his feet. In standing, one will scratch his head, another will put his hands on hips. One student will take hold of an object several times before lifting it, another as he picks it up will make gestures to show how heavy it is. Such movements are imposed on the action; the student must find a way to do the action without them. By making mistakes, however, a student begins to learn how his habits lead him away from neutrality.

A second level of error has to do with the tempo of movement. The actor may seize an object abruptly, without preparation, or he may wait so long that when he picks up the object, the need to do so is gone. Either error will leave questions in an observer's mind. "Why so fast?" Or "why so slow?" If the question arises, the action is not neutral – an attitude has intruded on the movement. There is a moment when the body is ready to move, and if the movement happens at that moment, no question arises.

A third level of error is marked by the imposed attitude. The student performs a single action, but in a manner that creates the image of a character with prior experience of the action. The hands may be so stiff that they seem fearful or hostile. The chest may be sunken, expressing fatigue or cunning, or expanded, showing curiosity. The student must examine his customary self-use, because neutral action is performed as if for the first time. No one part of the body, nor the mask itself, can draw attention; in neutrality, the entire body and the surrounding space are perceived with equal weight. To focus on a part of the space – to expand the chest, for instance – is to be dramatic and not neutral.

The initial exercises introduce the student to a process of experiment, perception, and change. Each error brings discovery of a new approach to the task. The new approach is questioned, in its turn, bringing the student closer to a condition that he can fully achieve only for brief moments. The research of neutrality never ends, for every level of knowledge, if accepted rather than questioned, becomes a technique imposed on the mask. The advantage for the performer is that each new technique is stronger than the old, because it is closer to the body's natural functioning.

After exploring simple actions in the mask, the teacher may assign extended scenarios, in which the person wearing the mask encounters elements or objects. Some of the common exercises are:

- 1 The figure wakes and moves toward light.
- 2 The figure wakes in the desert and walks into a city.
- 3 The figure wakes in the desert; goes to a river and enters it, perceiving its flow and its source; finds a tree, from which a bird flies.
- 4 The figure encounters another figure, of the opposite sex (man meets woman).
- 5 The figure wakes and stands in a fog; explores the fog; finds himself at the edge of the sea, as the fog clears; throws a stone out to sea.
- 6 The figure walks along a beach; goes to the end of a pier; sees a boat moving across the water, and waves to a person in the boat.
- 7 The figure walks to the end of the pier and pulls in a sailboat; punts the boat away from the shore, raises sail, and rests at the tiller; lowers sail and throws out the anchor; casts a net and pulls it in full of fish; lifts the anchor, raises sail, and rests at the tiller.

The teacher looks for simplicity and clarity in the actor's imagery. Lecoq has said that "If the Neutral Mask looks at the sea, it becomes the sea." Does the actor accept the environment, or does he establish a dramatic conflict with it? Does he show us the sea, or his own impression of the sea? Are the imaginary objects established in their weight and texture as well as in their shape? Is each experience – touching the earth, entering the river, casting the net – finished before another is begun? Does the actor show awareness of another person, or is he only compelled in a social way to look at him? Does he show awareness of objects and elements, or is he only compelled in an intellectual way to touch them? Is his breathing quiet and regular, or jagged and dramatic? Does the stone continue its flight after it leaves the actor's hand? "How can I discover without curiosity?" protests the student, and in asking the question, he defines the assignment.

In the exercise called "Discovery," the actor carrying the mask assumes a position of sleep, while the teacher places around him objects of various shapes, weights, and textures. The assignment is to wake up, to explore several of the objects as if one had no experience of them, and to return to sleep. Familiar objects are treacherous; it is tempting to hold a knife by the handle, to pick up a book and read the print, to open an umbrella, to bounce a ball, but these familiar actions may assume a history of interaction with the object. The neutral mask might discover the working of the umbrella, but only as the result of an exploration; and that discovery, if it comes, has no psychological or intellectual purpose. The mask does not impose a concept on the environment, but accepts the experiences contained within the environment.

Not all neutrality exercises cast the actor as a human figure. Rolfé asks her students to identify with animals in the neutral mask; or to recreate the images of a *haiku*. Hayes-Marshall gives assignments in the elements: earth, air, fire, and water. By asking the student to carry the mask in a nonhuman image, the teacher extends the student's ability to enter a condition without imposing personal associations on it.

BENEFITS OF THE TRAINING FOR THE ACTOR

The neutral mask is a way of understanding performance, not a way of performing. The mask is a tool for analyzing the quality of the body's action. The mask hides the face, but reveals the attitudes and intentions, the nuances, the feeling tones, that are otherwise only dimly sensed in a person's motion or stillness. When he carries it, the actor must communicate through his whole person; and the spectator must perceive the expression of the whole person. The experience can be frightening, because it is like being, or perceiving, a second person within the familiar body. Because the neutral mask is empty to begin with, it fills with whatever expression is perceived in the body. Hayes-Marshall says that "a good neutral mask looks like the person who puts it on." Trained observers know the expression of the face before the student takes off the mask. The mask draws attention to the body's points of resistance, and demands, as the price of comfort, that the body be integrated in a single image. Carrying the mask is internal and external, analytic and holistic. The dichotomies of physical and emotional technique are united in a single experience. The neutral mask allows the quality of a movement to be seen; it takes that quality on itself and magnifies it.

Because it requires participation in an image different from oneself, the mask attacks mumble-and-scratch naturalism. Peter Frisch has described the kind of actor who says, "Oh, I know that character, that character is just like me," when the truth is that "the character is nothing like they are. They see it through their own neurotic self-image." The neutral mask can lead an actor to reject his habitual identifications in favor of a deeper, simpler understanding of his powers of expression.

The neutral mask teaches simplicity in stillness and in activity. When an actor throws a stone, each part of his body should throw the stone, and no part should do anything else. The action should be allowed to complete itself before it is terminated, and it should terminate either in stillness or in the incipience of the next action. Bad movement training confuses activity with commitment; in the hands of a good teacher, the mask shows us that many details of our movement are parasitic behaviors, caused by resistance to the task at hand. When the actor clears himself of habitual assumptions and attitudes, he becomes a finely tuned instrument, capable of recording the subtle phases of perception and intention. An actor who is comfortable in stillness and activity, who commits to both, and who moves easily from one state to the other, is an actor who commands the stage. The neutral mask provides a way for the teacher and student momentarily to grasp and hold on to the intangible quality called "presence."

The actor cannot be neutral; he can only hope to attain moments of neutral action. Yet the pursuit of neutrality purifies him, making his very errors more commanding. Shedding personal clichés and habitual responses, he looks deeper into himself for images that are truly his own. After experiencing the neutral mask, he moves on to expressive masks, to the speaking masks of *commedia*, and finally to the clown nose and the discovery of his personal clown. Beneath these masks, however, is the state of near-neutrality: in a sense, the actor wears the neutral mask beneath every other mask and every other character. Lecoq likens the neutral masks to "the bottom of the sea," whereas "the Expressive Mask is like waves."

The neutral mask is not a way of performing; there is no neutral “style” of acting. The mask helps to identify a resting state for the actor, a condition of presence from which all things are possible, and to which all actions return at completion.

12

BALI AND GROTOWSKI

Some parallels in the training process

I Wayan Lendra

The Objective Drama Project (November 1983–June 1986) was a special research project conducted at the University of California-Irvine (UCI), sponsored by the Department of Drama with Dr Robert Cohen as its principal promoter. The project was formulated and directed by Jerzy Grotowski as an extension of his previous Theatre of Sources. The direction of the project was to isolate the performative expressions of several traditional cultures and introduce them to performers outside of their original cultural contexts. Once the technical aspects of a form were internalized, the effects of the relationships among performer, form, group, and environment were the subject of observation. A 1984 “Research and Development Report” by Cohen described the project:

“Objective Drama” is Jerzy Grotowski’s term for those elements of the ancient rituals of various world cultures which have a precise, and therefore objective, impact on participants, quite apart from solely theological or symbolic significance. Mr Grotowski’s intention is to isolate and study such elements of performative movements, dances, songs, incantations, structures of language, rhythms, and uses of space. Those elements are sought by means of a distillation process from the complex through the simple and through the separation of elements one from the other.

Each cultural form was taught by an expert performer native to that culture. The traditional cultural forms included: Haitian voodoo ritual, whirling dervish, Korean shamanistic dance and songs, Balinese incantation and mantra, hatha yoga, and Japanese karate. A number of exercises were also developed throughout the project. Literary texts such as the Gospel of Saint Thomas and some literature from Hinduism were used in the newly created songs.

Two traditional practitioners from Haiti, Maud (Robert) and Tiga (Jean-Claude Garoute), worked intensively with us for several months. They taught the movements and songs of Haitian voodoo accompanied by traditional drums. A karate master from Japan and a master performer of the Sufi dervish tradition taught for short periods. A number of new exercises were developed by “technical specialists” from traditional material Grotowski had worked on during his Theatre of Sources

in Poland. In addition to all of these exercises, we worked intensively on our individual or group pieces called *Mystery Play*, a work that was not intended to be performed for the general public. Through *Mystery Play* we explored our personal artistic possibilities, applying our insights and experiences gained from the work and the creative energy generated by the exercises. This intensive work was directed by Grotowski. *Mystery Play* was performed at marathon sessions – two days and two nights of work.

Four of us technical specialists worked with the project continuously: Du Yee Chang from Korea, Jairo Cuesta-Gonzales from Colombia, Wei-Cheng Chen from Taiwan, and myself from Bali, Indonesia (Figure 12.1). The four of us were accomplished artists in our own cultural traditions, with backgrounds in experimental modern theatre. We learned and recorded the materials of the traditional practitioners and helped Grotowski to formulate new exercises. We then taught and guided the 18 participants in both the traditional forms and the new work. These participants included some students from UCI. Other participants, selected by audition, worked with us for set short periods of time. They came from different countries, many from cities and universities in the United States. For example, 15 students from Yale University were invited for a two-week period and 10 from New York University joined for another session.



Fig. 12.1 The author as the old man *Topeng Tua*, a character from *Topeng* dance theatre. (Photo by Chris Hrusa.)

Throughout the three years of work, Grotowski's role was manifold. On the administrative side he was assisted by Marion Barnett. This allowed him to focus on his primary function as director of the research activities in the workplace. During the exercises Grotowski observed and made notes, taught, and commented. He intervened with either physical or verbal directions. The energy of his presence was an essential contribution to the working process.

The project took place on the southern edge of the campus of UCI, in an isolated area of rolling hills populated only with horses, cattle, and field rabbits. Our center of work was two buildings: an old historic building known as "the barn," renovated into a studio theatre for the project, and a new hexagonal, one-room, redwood structure called "the yurt." Both buildings had wood floors and many windows that allowed in natural light. The color of the walls in the barn was light blue while the yurt was natural wood. At night we used kerosene lanterns for light, although electricity was available. The hills behind our studios were as much a part of the workspace as the buildings, and much of our group work took place outdoors.

The work itself was very rigorous. It required not only physical dexterity and stamina but also mental perseverance. Grotowski imposed uncompromising discipline. There were many requirements that we had to observe. Grotowski prescribed some rules which were difficult to perform, in the same way he chose participants, chose to work in nature, and isolated the essential elements of ancient performative rituals. In addition to all these, he proposed to work long hours. Most of the time we worked between five and six days a week. Each exercise would last approximately two hours or longer depending on the development of the action. Our sessions, which usually began in the early evening, often extended for eight hours, sometimes through the entire night.

The work affected my perceptions on many levels simultaneously. There was a change of consciousness and awareness, a change of physical impulses and behavior, and an intensity which developed throughout the work. Generally I felt my body was awake even though I was working long hours almost every day. I was very much connected with myself and certainly with my native culture, Bali. There seemed to be a close similarity with the trance situations I had seen in Bali, or the trancelike quality of Balinese performing arts.

In the summer of 1984 I went back to Bali for a break from the project. During this visit I witnessed a *calonarang* performance, a trance dance drama featuring *Barong* (a mythical dragon-like figure of benevolent nature) and *Rangda* (an awesome masked figure of demonic quality), performed during the anniversary celebration of the temple, Bukit, in my village, Bitra. About 20 of my friends and relatives, men and women, went into trance. The following days I interviewed some of the performers, focusing on a specific question: whether or not they were aware of the spectators and surroundings during the trance. Each of them answered "yes." They added that their bodies became sensitive and they felt a burning and itching sensation in different parts of the body, particularly in the chest. Their awareness became more acute than in normal everyday life. They said that if they were not totally alert they could hurt someone with the sharp *kris* (a dagger) they carried. Yet, it was remarkable that they were not at all aware of stabbing their chests or cheeks with the sharp steel daggers, or of eating live chicks. During the violent moment of stabbing, the performers were carefully watched by assistants in case of an unexpected mistake.

Jane Belo, in *Trance in Bali* (recorded in the late 1930s and published in 1960), quoted trance performers who reported that during the performance they “were in and out of trance” (1960: 254). She reports that during the convulsions going in and out of trance, the performers were unaware of their beings and surroundings; the trancers I interviewed reported a similar state. She also writes that during the performance the trancers were often playful, stealing each others’ chicks, eggs, or liquor and challenging each other in the action of stabbing. I also observed the childlike playfulness or behavior of the trancers in several different trance forms in Bali.

The point I am making here is that during the state of trance, the Balinese trancer experiences both a state of acute awareness, a state of the true self (*inget*) and a state of being unaware (*engsap*). In the state of *inget* the trancer is very much her- or himself and can be very playful, like a child, while in the state of *engsap* the connection with the surroundings is cut, during which time the stabbing may occur.

I am convinced that there are a number of similarities between Balinese trance performers, Grotowski’s words concerning trance, and my experiences in the project. Grotowski once said, referring to the Haitian trance tradition, that when a person is in trance he is “highly aware of his surroundings.” During this time the person is deeply involved with what he is doing and at the same time he is capable of sensing and incorporating the events in his environment without being affected by them. This may be similar to the state of being of a powerful actor, whose “presence” deeply affects the spectators as well as absorbs his or her surroundings. The actor’s art is organic, a phenomenon generated not by his or her intention to “show,” but by an honest and sincere motivation to “do” what he or she is doing.

My interest in this research in Bali was to relate it to my experience with Grotowski in California. From the beginning of the project I felt that there was something very Balinese about Grotowski’s work, even though the nature of the theatrical work exercises was not Balinese. I felt that the project was more than a theatre project. I realized what Grotowski meant by “yes but not only” when he was asked in a 1983 interview for the *Los Angeles Times* if this was a theatre project.

The project certainly had a spiritual dimension even though Grotowski never referred to it as spiritual work. This is similar to the spiritual nature of the Balinese theatre that I have been doing since I was a child. Through the work of the project, Grotowski helped to deepen my insights into the spiritual nature of Balinese arts. He brought me back to my own sources. Through my research and knowledge of the Balinese performing arts and my interviews with religious practitioners in Bali, I found that there is a parallel between Grotowski’s work and Balinese theatre in the training process as well as in its impact on the actor and the spectator.

To analyze and highlight Grotowski’s work based on my interpretation as a direct participant and as a Balinese artist, I would first like to consider three elements basic to the Balinese way of life and art. The first is the intimate relationship between people and nature, which is similar to Grotowski’s high regard for working in a natural setting. The second is the routine of religious rituals and custom, essential elements which have a close relationship with Grotowski’s specific selection of traditional discipline and teaching methods applied in the project. And last, the way the Balinese people consider art, besides being an entertainment, as a medium of true inner expression, connecting the gods to their worshipers. This is

similar to Grotowski's work, in the manner in which he examines how performative arts have the potential to generate higher awareness.

It is important to note that these three major elements are woven into Balinese daily life. The daily application of these elements throughout the stages of life allows a Balinese to express his respect for nature, to realize his humanity, and to shape him into a Balinese. As Belo accurately says in her book:

The Balinese are people whose everyday behavior is measured, controlled, graceful, tranquil. Emotion is not easily expressed. Dignity and an adherence to the rules of decorum are customary. At the same time they show a susceptibility and a facility of going into states of trance, states in which there is an altered consciousness, and a behavior springing from a deep level of personality is manifested.

(Belo 1960: 1)

I believe that Belo's statement about the Balinese has a parallel with what I experienced and observed in the Objective Drama. What do the traditional Balinese do that has inspired Belo to make such a statement? We should first examine the interrelationship between the essential nature of Balinese arts and the Balinese ways of life in relation to religion and nature.

Traditional Balinese arts, whether music, dance, theatre, painting, sculpture, or food offerings always have a religious function as well as an entertainment or worldly function. The "essence of the true effort" in doing the arts serves as an offering to the gods and goddesses, while the "form and energy" generated from and stimulated by the arts or artists entertain, touch, and bring harmony to the spectators. Whether the art is sacred or secular, if it is true art coming from the deepest heart of the artist, the process of the making and the presentation of the arts in Bali always involves a religious commitment. Balinese consider the arts a tool for bringing out the expression of the inner spirit, our true nature. The artist's skill and the true and honest way of doing (*ngayah*) are the mediums for that expression. Because of this attitude, the arts should be handled with care and respect. This should be reflected in one's thoughts and actions.

Care and respect are performed not only to create a sense of humbleness necessary in the arts and in life, but also because what is being cared for and respected has a definite meaning. Precise technical skills, for example, should be acquired through learning and through conforming to the traditional forms. These forms are difficult to master and, therefore, require a strong motivation and dedication. Even though they vary slightly from region to region and master to master, the basic forms – such as the *agem* (basic body positions) – are a physical structure that has a physical and psychological impact. In a precisely performed *agem*, the creation and flow of energy is nurtured (this will be further described below). Of course there are other technical elements involved in creating these effects of energy. These have an impact on the performer and the spectator: a heightening of awareness and a sense of well-being. A performer may say that s/he feels complete after *ngayah*, performing a true act.

However, the awakening of higher awareness cannot be fully accomplished only through the mastery of techniques. Observing religious and traditional ways of conduct constitutes the other half of the effort. In Bali, skilled activities, especially those which are going to be exposed to the public, such as the performing arts, are always preceded by a presentation of an offering to the gods or the lower spirits.

This is a form of protecting oneself against any unexpected danger. Making offerings is a form of contemplation which results in a self-assurance, an alertness of the body and mind.

To the Balinese, life is wonderful, it is precious. The Balinese believe that an individual is a reincarnation of her or his ancestor, therefore, life is a special thing to have and care for. Balinese also believe that we are not alone in this world. There are higher energies and spirits around us. These others cannot be seen, except occasionally by special eyes, heard by special ears, and understood by unsuppressed instincts. They are unknown to the brain, therefore they are a mystery. The mystery of the unknown and the belief in it create a wonder. This leads to our “humbleness,” a state of being that is free, honest, and respectful. This is opposed to an “arrogant” manner – an attitude that a person “knows” is not considered refined and proper.

The Balinese believe that the higher energies (gods) and the lower energies (demons) exist in nature and in us. A Balinese *dalang* (puppeteer) told me: “Pray to your god inside you before you pray to the gods in the temples. If you cannot find it, try to find it while you pray to the gods in the temples.” The Balinese believe that gods and other higher and lower energies live at the peak of the sacred mountains, in sacred spots, in sacred objects, in the ocean, in trees, and in animals. Each of these natural elements has its own life and energy. It is no wonder that the Balinese celebrate *tumpek uduh*, a ceremony for trees and animals, every 210 days; *tumpek wayang*, a ceremony for puppetry and performing arts, during which time costumes, headdresses, and masks are given offerings; and *tumpek landep*, a ceremony for sharp objects such as the kris. To the Balinese, their island is full of gods and both good and bad spirits. Their presence is felt instinctively and the vibrations of these energies are overwhelming. It is a magical place.

The Balinese built thousands of temples, shrines, and altars almost everywhere on the island. On this beautiful island, the view is wonderful during the day, while at night and during transitional times the place becomes awesome. The night belongs to the spirit world and to the gods, while the day belongs to the living and also to the ever-present gods. Life and death are one in Bali. Life is a beauty and death is a danger that creates a subtle undertone of fear. Yet, when death must come it is willingly accepted and even celebrated.

To avoid danger, the gods should be consulted and asked for their blessings whenever a person is doing any activity, especially a skilled activity. The lower spirits also have their place, and should be appeased. *Banten* – ornately decorated offerings of food, fruits, flowers, and incense – are usually presented to the gods for their blessings and to the lower spirits to assure that they will not disturb the activities. In the performing arts, the powers of gods or demons may be invoked if they are needed. When an actor is performing the character of a demon, the energy of the demon may be called. Similarly, the god may be invoked if an actor is performing a deity or simply invited to witness and to bless the performance.

The *banten* physically acknowledges the existence of the gods and spirits of nature and expresses the spiritual commitment of the performer. If the believer does not do this preliminary ritual, he will have a feeling of guilt which leads to anxiety and perhaps incompetence. He may even fail. The Balinese are afraid of this state of imbalance, which could lead them to be mix-oriented (*paling*), and

if prolonged, could lead to mental derangement (*budah*). “Brought up in fear of supernatural danger, there was a persistent need for assurance” (Belo 1960: 251).

RELIGIOUS PREPARATIONS IN TRAINING

When a group of children are chosen to become actors and dancers, an auspicious day from the Balinese calendar is selected for the very first rehearsal. Selecting a special day for the beginning of an activity is a common practice in Bali. The selection of the day is based on the cycle of the planets and the vibration of nature. This special time to start an activity is called *menuasen*, which literally means “to mark with the auspicious day.” On another special day soon after *menuasen*, the children will undergo a ceremonial initiation called *meperascita*, which literally means “the purification of body and mind.” The children may be taken to a temple to ask for a blessing from the gods. Preceding each rehearsal, small offerings (*banter canang*) are made and incense burned at the shrine for the god or guardian of the crossroads where the community center is located. The gamelan orchestra that accompanies the rehearsal, as well as the rehearsal space itself, are also given small offerings. Even though the degree of elaborateness and the frequency of this ritual differs from village to village, or family to family, it is customary in Bali to observe this process properly. An unsuccessful activity would be blamed on the failure to observe the ritual routine, if only in its simplest form. The Balinese would say, “*Sing taen nang ngai canang kenkenan men bisa dueg*,” which literally means, “Just a simple offering you never make, how can you be successful?”

Pasupati is the next ceremony that the children go through once they have achieved a satisfactory level of technical precision. The function of this ceremony is to transform raw materials – the costumes, headdresses, and masks – into powerful art objects by infusing them with spiritual energy. This process, carried out by a priest and blessed by the gods in the temple, transforms these ordinary materials into carriers of sacred power. The performers, who are also present at this ceremony, are further purified as well. In a parallel symbolic sense, the performer’s art of dance or acting is transformed from raw learned technique into a spiritually internalized artistic expression. After this purification, the artists are united with the sacred objects and materials that will be used at the moment of their premiere performance and thereafter. From this time onward the performer is ready to seek *taksu*, the ultimate spiritual power that allows the performer to present his or her art in its truest form.

This process of religious ritual occurs not only in the performing arts but also in other skilled professions. To become a priest and/or a diviner, for example, one must go through several steps of ritual purification (*mewinten*) and adhere to an increasing number of behavioral restrictions that distinguish one from ordinary others. Only after these rituals are performed can a priest learn sacred texts such as mantras, sacred chants. The individual must also go through a ceremony called *mesakapan dewa*, a ritual “marriage” to the god of the temple in which he or she officiates as priest or acts as a diviner.

Religious ritual is a necessity in Bali. It is like a need to breathe. It is rejuvenating, a renewal of energy – it becomes a way of life. For this reason, ritual operates in every facet of Balinese life. It is practiced by priests and by lay people. And, of course, it is also practiced by artists. To Balinese, a ritual activity is fun. The ritual is

not only the time for the renewal of spiritual energy but also a time of celebration, of good food, of good clothes, and of a good time. It is a time to connect one's self to natural phenomena, and to rediscover one's own inner nature.

The main purpose of a purification ritual is to help the individual to discover the meanings of her or his duties. It also creates a context for attention to appropriate behavior and respect for the occupation one has chosen. Consequently, a person establishes an identity that is valued by the community. This mental cleansing prepares the body and mind to concentrate fully; and through repeated practice it deepens one's dedication and insights. Ritual also generates alertness in the person, a higher awareness necessary in life and the arts. In Bali, this awareness is reinforced by beliefs; its meaning is nurtured by nature; and its continuity is assured through repetition and the training process. Proper traditional training is necessary for effective art, art that functions not only as entertainment, but also as a means of uniting one's true self with the infinite power of nature.

In the Objective Drama Project there were no religious practices, like those in Bali, performed by participants. Even though we worked on exercises which derived from rituals of various traditions, Grotowski never referred to these exercises as religious. They were simply exercises that had special values. However, the manner in which this work was conducted and organized played an important role in the successful result and effect of the work. Like the religious practices that are part of the Balinese training process, the Objective Drama Project was executed in a very distinct manner.

An important word which Grotowski used frequently was "alert"; participants should be alert. In order to be alert the first and most important basic rule to observe is to be silent. This rule permeated every facet of the project. Participants were only allowed to speak when they really needed to express an idea related to the project, or when asked to discuss their reactions to specific activities. During breaks we generally did not speak. This was the time to absorb and internalize the experience. Grotowski called this a "silence of saturation." It was not meant to be a spiritual silence. Those who wished to discuss personal matters were asked to talk outside the project area. Owing to the nature of the work, nobody did this. This requirement was unusually challenging especially for newly arrived participants, as they had to abandon conventional socializing during and between the long hours of work.

Being silent allows many possibilities. Part of the work was to increase the awareness of being in an environment, to settle the mind through silent self-observation. This is closely related to the awareness and alertness resulting from the attentive and respectful manner seen in Balinese religious activities, such as the purification ceremony. By eliminating verbal dialog in the project we reduced the mechanical social interaction of ordinary life. This allowed us to develop an attunement to each other, the group, and the surroundings by sensing their presence or actions. It allowed us to suspend judgments about people and situations and just to be, do, and observe.

There were other specific requirements, such as when one walked in the fields or in the woods one was not allowed to pick up anything or to disturb nature. In Bali, an unnecessary action in nature (*usil*) is a degraded behavior strongly forbidden for Balinese children. In the project we were also told not to make noises with our feet or hum while walking in the field. Similarly, we could not make noises when

walking in the rehearsal space. This type of requirement allowed participants to be self-observant, a level of contemplation that leads to alertness. Occasionally Grotowski would spend a long time criticizing those who did not properly observe this way of working. To join the project, a participant had to learn exactly what to do and what not to do, a similar understanding held by believers in Balinese ritual, who know exactly what must be done in order to insure the efficacy of the ritual.

Everything was neatly organized in the project. What needed to be prepared before a work session began was clearly spelled out. Grotowski might ask Du Yee, or Jairo, or me, during the first two hours to discuss his plan for the rest of the session, while the others waited patiently and quietly. During this time some did warm-ups, some simply sat. In the meeting, Grotowski specified what needed to be corrected, who would be correcting whom, where the work would take place, and approximately how long it would take. This was very specific and very orderly. Grotowski never discussed the whole plan of the session, for he did not want people to have expectations that could lead to mechanical work. He wanted to create an organic flow of events, and therefore rearranged the sequence of the work according to the need and flow of each session. He often said that the work should have “new life” at every session. The only exercise with a set time was the exercise called “the Motions.” This action was always executed at sunset or sunrise.

We should remember that the project was designed to test the impact of the exercises. The participants were the “guinea pigs,” therefore they were not informed of the direction or plan for each session. Probably Grotowski himself did not know what would need work. Even if he knew he did not tell because that would go against the principle of the experiment.

Because of the disciplined nature of the work, the lifestyle in the project was very different from that of normal life. Socialization and an easy-going behavior did not take place. Alleviating one’s social problems or complaining was discouraged. Doubt resulting from the rules of working was resolved by quitting the project or participating fully. But even participants who complied with the rules still faced other difficulties of commitment to the work.

This is similar to the commitment in the Balinese training process, except in Bali this commitment is not experienced as hard work, but as a religious commitment. But both the Balinese and Grotowski’s style of commitment lead to the establishment of an identity. The religious nature of the traditional Balinese training is more pronounced than in the rigorous work of the Objective Drama Project. In Bali commitment and dedication are internalized; dedication is shown in daily actions, diligent practices. No Balinese actor would practice eight hours a day, or work from early evening until early morning. A Balinese performer might work until early morning when performing but, even so, would not perform everyday. Balinese actors might work hard and adhere to all kinds of rules and restrictions, but these rules and restrictions are tradition – everybody does the same. All are born into this tradition. There is no apparent pressure that an artist experiences, because her or his effort is supported by the society. Commitment and identity are molded by the traditional system, by the natural environment, and by religious beliefs.

Grotowski attempted to recreate this kind of tradition in the project by enforcing ways of working and by working in a natural setting. The experience of the work taught the participants the meaning of the work. Because the project was not intended to be lifelong, but only for three years, Grotowski had to conduct the

work very intensively. In the project everything was condensed, distilled, and selected. This ranged from the selection of participants to the strictness of rules and the materials explored in the work.

Working in the evening and through the night with the illumination of only oil lamps, for example, may have seemed unnatural and mysterious to a new participant. But the practical intention of this setting was to make the body and the mind alert. Generally evening is the time most people rest. But if asked to do difficult exercises during these hours and in such a setting, most likely the participant would react organically causing him or her to be alert, and increasing the effectiveness of the work. Grotowski is very fond of the idea of “contradiction,” an idea against conventional ways of living and understanding, but with the intention of provoking organic physical and mental responses on the part of participants.

The exercise called the Motions, practiced at sunset or sunrise, also has a practical purpose embedded in the idea of contradiction. Sunset and sunrise are the times when ordinary nature is spectacular. Yet, during the Motions the participant is not allowed to respond emotionally to what she sees. She cannot say the sunset is beautiful, which people normally do; she simply observes what is out there. This is one of the contradictions seen in the Motions, a contradiction that creates alertness and awareness of physical impulses. If this exercise is practiced consistently, the alertness resulting from it leads to a sensitivity of the body and, consequently, a spiritual experience.

In an agricultural society such as Bali, a performing art rehearsal usually takes place at night. The training occurs at night because during the day people work in the fields. In the evening their minds are more settled, their bodies are clean, and the temperature is cooler. Religious activities generally occur during transitional times, especially right before sunset. Banten (offerings) are presented to the gods and spirits at this time because this is the moment when the body and mind are alert. To Balinese, transitional times and night time belong to the negative forces and are therefore the times of danger, times to be alert. Any activity conducted during these times must be taken with great care. Thus we see a similar contradiction in the Balinese belief system as that in the Motions.

Another important element of the training process in the project was that Grotowski never described the meaning of or the idea behind any exercise. In the same way, the Balinese (except specialists such as priests) would not know the meanings and symbolism of the elaborate religious rituals. If a Balinese is asked why he performs a religious ritual, the usual answer would be “*Nak mule keto*,” meaning “That is the way it has been done.” But he knows that he feels a sense of well-being after performing the ritual. Thus the ritual is efficacious. In the project one could only understand the ideas and values of the work by listening to Grotowski, by observing his way, by experiencing the exercises, and by relating them to one’s own knowledge. Even so, the understanding was still an interpretation because the meaning of each exercise was not specifically described. Grotowski did not intend to give the meaning or the intended result of the exercises. He did not wish the participants to start working with an “idea.” He thought that to work on a physical exercise with an idea would be misleading and deceiving because the mind would be consciously searching for the result of the idea. The action would not be organic and the physical impulses would be blocked.

The rules and the technical precision and strategy of the different exercises were worked out in minute detail. In the workspace or at Grotowski's apartment we often discussed and analyzed them – did they work or not? Changes or adjustments occurred based on reevaluations. Once the criteria and rules were understood and became routine, specific corrections were given, mostly nonverbally. The understanding of the rules and the precision of the exercises were of primary importance. Grotowski and his assistants would always give corrections and criticism. The criticism, which was verbal, could be severe.

Because of the variety of both mental and physical demands encountered in the project, the work was not easy to follow. Grotowski was obviously aware of the difficulties. For this reason, he was very careful in selecting participants. He would look for a particular quality in a candidate. This was not based on technical ability, although technique had a value. It was based more on the “human quality” of the person. I recall when we auditioned 25 students in Pontadera, Italy, Grotowski stated clearly that the selection should first be based on “human quality.” What Grotowski meant by “human quality” was a puzzle to me. But during our three years of working together, I somehow understood. My interpretation is a person who is not arrogant, not pretentious, not overly nice, and not talkative; someone who is humble, simple, subtle but bright; a person who seems to have an interest in adventure and a curiosity for life. If this interpretation is correct, then I would definitely see a close relationship with the Balinese ideal of a novice performer.

The Balinese traditional theatre follows a formal structure, with characters that are well known to the people. Characters are divided into three different types: deities, humans, and demons. Actors are chosen for a role according to their personalities, human qualities, and physical types. The qualifications for the selection of a novice in Bali include a refined manner, respectfulness, and tolerance. Being humble is an important qualification because the responsibility of the artist is to become a medium. The artist must be able to invoke the character and allow that character to live through him or her. The spirit of the character would most likely enter the artist who has the qualifications mentioned.

PHYSICAL EXERCISES

Kinesthetic learning is the most important aspect of the learning process in both Balinese traditional training and in Grotowski's training. Verbal communication, describing what is being learned, is not a part of this training process. This is an ancient way in which a novice learns through the body directly rather than through a preliminary mental process. Grotowski says that “the body itself functions like a brain”; it can record and later recall movement patterns and emotion in a seemingly instinctive way, when stimuli are given. Grotowski discouraged learning through verbal explanation, perhaps because the brain does not record the emotional quality of an action when learned through a mental process only. Learning kinesthetically, on the other hand, incorporates both the physical precision and the emotional quality of the action. This is also true of vocal work.

In Bali kinesthetic learning takes place in two distinct ways. In the first, the teacher moves the body of the young student, shaping and giving the flow of the direction of the movement. The body of the child is manipulated as a puppet is manipulated by a puppeteer. When the student is older and more accomplished, the

teacher may offer corrections by a light touch or facial and body signals. The student also learns through observing and following the teacher, repeating the voice or movement sequence many times. Repetition is another basic principle of kinesthetic learning through which the body will internalize the physical experience. Repetition may lead to a mechanical quality but a student is instructed to find the life of the action in each repetition.

In the Objective Drama Project, this process of training was highly valued and consistently applied. Throughout the work, the exercises were communicated mostly nonverbally. When verbal direction was needed, the leader or teacher used only limited and precise words. Otherwise the exercises were conducted in silence. If necessary, Grotowski would explain the requirements of an exercise. Occasionally he gave a lengthy instruction, or got up during an action, speaking loudly. Sometimes he screamed, adding energy to a weak action. As in Balinese training, the actions were learned through following the leader; the observation/physical imitation/repetition formula was used, as in traditional training. However, the Balinese puppet method of shaping the student's body was not applied because the project students were already adults. Using this method with adults is physically impractical and socially inappropriate.

THE MOTIONS

The Motions is a physical exercise that incorporates several elements of training. It is a body-stretching exercise as well as training for mental endurance. The primary purpose of this exercise is to train the body to be sensitive and the mind to be alert. The Motions, executed in a standing position, is a complex exercise, meditative in quality, slowly performed and physically strenuous. It was usually practiced outdoors on the hillside, in silence, and during transitional times, especially at sunset and at sunrise. The exercise always begins facing the sun. The original duration of the Motions was about an hour and a half, but later it was reduced to 45 minutes. It is normally done in a group, in a diamond-shaped formation, in which four leaders stand at the four corners of the diamond. The participants find their places inside the diamond shape with appropriate distances from each other. They should be able to see the leaders at the four directions they are going to face, just as the Balinese novice can clearly see the teacher and follow the action.

The exercise relates to seven directions: east, west, north, south, up, down, and center. The up and down are performed in connection with body movements, and the imaginary center is associated with the heart and with what Grotowski calls the "primary position." There are three major movements, each of which is repeated at the four directions. The three major movements are connected by several transitional movements. There is also a very slow turning which is used to reach the four cardinal points. The slow turning, executed in place, may take from one to two minutes depending on which direction is being reached. However, there is a basic body position which appears to be one of the most important features of the Motions. This movement is similar to the basic stance of Balinese dance theatre called *agem* (Figure 12.2).¹

The primary position is executed standing. The feet are placed parallel, about one fist apart. The knees are slightly bent and the body weight rests on the balls of the feet, as if the performer is ready to move. The torso and the head and chin are



Fig. 12.2 The *agem*, or basic body position, for Balinese dance theatre. (Photo by Leslie S. Lendra.)

gently pulled in, so that energy travels from the bottom of the spine up to the head. The torso and the head are tilted forward, which allows a slight contraction and pull at the bottom of the torso. The pelvic region is tucked in, the abdomen is lifted, and the chest and the shoulders are relaxed. The arms are straight, placed at either side of the body, and the base of each thumb touches slightly the section below the hips. The palms face backward, and the fingers, touching each other, are slightly curved in and relaxed. The eyes see in a panoramic view, a wide-angle vision. In this primary position the body should feel light and ready. This position is intended to develop the sensitivity of the body and to help generate mental alertness.

Grotowski's primary position is similar to the Balinese *agem* in the alignment of the torso and the head, and in the effect of the position on the body and mind. An exception is the male-style *agem* for a strong character, for which the legs are turned out and about one step diagonally apart. The pelvic region is slightly thrust out instead of tucked in as in the primary position. Because in Balinese dance the upper arms are generally raised in line with the shoulders, and the lower arms, with hyper-extended hands and spread fingers, are bent forward at the elbows, the shoulders tend to be slightly contracted. However, the most important quality of both *agem* and the primary position is the alignment of the torso and the head, as well as the slight leaning forward of this line of the body. The tilt causes a pull and a contraction which generates energy. This energy flows upward to the head which then causes the intended awareness. This is closely related to the elaborate Indian energy system of *chakra*, in which the energy generated from the bottom of the spine (*muladara*) travels upward to the head (*sahasrāra*), the crown chakra. At this point higher awareness is achieved. Another essential result of both the Balinese basic stance and the primary position, in my experience, is that it creates the feeling of

lightness and readiness. There is an essential feeling of energy traveling upward, triggering physical and mental sensitivity.

Another essential requirement of the Motions is that the eyes should see in a wide angle, a panoramic view, and the ears should hear all sounds at once. Grotowski usually said: "See that you are seeing and hear that you are hearing." This is a difficult thing to do and at first it sounds like a crazy thing to do. Participants are instructed not to react to what they are seeing or hearing. Typically, when performing this slow and meditative exercise, our brain begins speaking – a variety of thoughts will come. If thoughts come we must not react to the thoughts or continue to develop the thoughts, but instead simply observe them. We notice the thoughts and let them pass by in the same way we observe what we see and hear. While seeing and hearing, the body must be in the correct position and we must remember the sequence of the action. During this action, the body often slightly changes its position without our awareness. Because of this, Grotowski insisted that we strive always to be aware of the precision of the body position and make self-corrections from time to time.

The rules of this exercise seem to be simple, but to perform the Motions precisely – physically and mentally – is extremely difficult. The brain is occupied with monitoring the minute details of the physical action, thus freeing the inner mind, the subtler consciousness, to "come out" and merge with the environment. The inner consciousness can only do this when the brain is engaged in some directed thinking and so does not interfere. But the purpose of the physical precision of the movements is not just to keep the brain busy. When the movements are performed as designed, they help the body to generate innate physical power. If the brain fails to watch the body, fails to observe the thoughts, and reacts emotionally to what is seen by the eyes and heard by the ears, the inner energy will not manifest itself.

The Motions is a complex exercise. Several elements of technique are performed at once. To see really with panoramic vision is difficult. When we are able to see in a panoramic view, our perception cannot be as focused as when we see only one thing. This is difficult because in daily life we constantly focus, selecting from our perceptions what we want to see or hear. The brain is curious and will follow something of interest, almost automatically. But the requirement of the Motions is that we must not react to any one thing but must fully perceive all that there is to see and hear. To see and hear and not to react, according to the way we normally live, is a contradiction. This contradiction creates "life" and self-awareness.

In my experience, when I see with panoramic vision and hear all sounds – both in performing Balinese dance/acting and in doing the Motions precisely – I become highly aware of my body; it absorbs what I see and hear. The surroundings become one with my body, and I feel as if my body is hollow and is being lifted. The more I see and hear, the more I sense my body. Especially in the Motions I feel the vibration of my energy throughout my body and I feel the pulses of my heart in my feet. Sometimes I hear a high-pitched and continuous noise in my ears. Different parts of my body sometimes move by themselves. As I become aware of all these sensations, it seems that my attention to them diminishes the flow. When this happens, I proceed to correct my body positions. After each session of the Motions, I usually have the feeling of distilled energy and oneness in my body.

CONCLUSION

The Motions is one of the physical exercises practiced in the Objective Drama Project. In my observation and understanding, these exercises have a single, most important purpose: the awakening of innate physical power. This physical power, which the Hindu tradition refers to as the “sleeping energy” (*kundalini*), lies at the bottom of the spine. This innate energy can be awakened through a variety of physical and vocal exercises. Grotowski described what I call innate physical power as the “reptile brain,” the spinal cord and brain stem,² with the “sleeping energy” at the very bottom of the spine. This unawakened energy source exists in every human being. Grotowski wanted to investigate and find a way to wake up this energy center which, when awakened, can increase our awareness, sensitivity, and perception. The awakened state is necessary not only in life but also in the performing arts. For this reason Grotowski was interested in working on the undulating spinal movement of the Haitian voodoo ritual and the Hindu spinal movement exercise called *kundalini*, which I studied and practiced closely. Like the Motions, these two exercises have a powerful effect on the body.

In Bali, the study of gaining spiritual energy is still a strong tradition practiced by trancers and diviners. It is also practiced by *dalangs*, and by *pregina wayah*, highly accomplished artists, usually older performers. In the arts, this ability to awaken innate physical power and invoke this energy is a necessity. The function of artists is to be more than entertainers. They are also considered to be mediums between the people and the gods. For this reason they need to have spiritual knowledge and the ability to invoke this innate energy. An artist who has this ability is considered to have *taksu*, an ultimate spiritual energy that helps the performer project the essence of his or her art.

The knowledge and ability to invoke *taksu* is not limited to artists. Intelligent individuals can also have this innate or learned ability. Dr I Made Bandem, a Balinese and a scholar in Indonesian performing arts told me that *taksu* can be referred to as “genuine creativity,” an ability acquired through education, practice, and the experience of both worldly and spiritual insights.

In Bali, highly competent spiritual practitioners such as priests, priestesses, diviners and traditional healers – especially those attached to specific temples – are also considered to have *taksu*. They can invoke innate physical power and receive signs and messages from nature. The diviners belonging to specific temples through their trance states deliver the messages of the gods or goddesses to the people. The messages are oracles which are followed by the people. The messages often contain requests for what is lacking and what needs to be done to restore the balance of life in the community. They can also contain prophecies or predictions which consequently alert the people and direct them to take necessary actions. This tradition remains alive in Bali – and is similar to what Grotowski is investigating.

But the most important part of the research at UCI was the training process. The research of the Objective Drama Project included selecting participants, setting the work in the natural environment, training the participants to be sensitive to nature, applying specific regulations in the workplace, and, most important, using various exercises from traditional performative arts and ancient literatures. All of these elements are parallel to traditional training in Balinese arts and life.

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CULTURE IS THE BODY

Tadashi Suzuki

The main purpose of my method is to uncover and bring to the surface the physically perceptive sensibility which actors had originally, before the theatre acquired its various codified performing styles, and to heighten their innate expressive abilities. I first began to think of the method when I was trying to search for ways to examine the differences in physical perception among different peoples, such as are found while the actors on stage just stand still, or have an impulse, take some action. I wished to integrate these differences into something we humans could share as a common property, beyond all differences in race and nationality.

First of all, I felt the necessity of inspecting our human orientation, in sensibility or feeling, toward the ground or floor – the attraction for the ground which the lower half of the body feels. I extracted some basic ways of using the body as perceiving various nuances of feeling, and then arranging them to formulate my method.

Technically speaking, my method consists of training to learn to speak powerfully and with clear articulation, and also to learn to make the whole body *speak*, even when one keeps silent. It is thus that actors can learn the best way to exist on the stage. By applying this method, I want to make it possible for actors to develop their ability of physical expression and also to nourish a tenacity of concentration.

In short, this training is, so to speak, a grammar necessary to materialize the theatre that is in my mind. However, it is desirable that this “grammar” should be assimilated into the body as a second instinct, just as one cannot enjoy a lively conversation as long as one is always conscious of grammar in speaking. These techniques should be mastered, studied, until they serve as an “operational hypothesis,” so that the actors may truly feel themselves “fictional” on stage. For actors to realize the images they themselves pursue, they will have to develop at least this basic physical sensibility.

In my opinion, a “cultured” society is one where the perceptive and expressive abilities of the human body are used to the full; where they provide the basic means of communication. A civilized country is not always a “cultured” society.

It is true that civilization originated in connection with the functions of the human body; it may be interpreted as the expansion of basic functions

of the human body or the extension of the physical faculties – of the eyes, ears, tongue, the hands and feet. For example, the invention of such devices as the telescope and microscope is a result of human aspiration and endeavor to *see more*, radicalizing the faculty of sight. The accumulated effect of such endeavors is civilization – the product of the expansion and extension of physical faculties.

What we have to consider, then, is the kind of energy required to materialize such aspirations. That leads us to think about modernization. A criterion some sociologists in the United States apply to distinguish between modernized and pre-modernized societies is the ratio of animal energy to non-animal energy. Animal energy here refers to the physical energy supplied by human beings, horses or cattle, etc.; while non-animal energy refers to electric power, nuclear power and the like. One way of showing whether a country is modernized is to calculate how much non-animal energy is used. Roughly speaking, in African and Near Eastern countries, for example, the ratio of animal energy used is very high, compared with such countries as the United States or Japan, where energy derived from oil, electricity, nuclear power is used in all processes of production.

If we apply this thinking to the theatre, we notice that most contemporary theatre is “modernized”; non-animal energy is fully utilized. Lighting is done through electricity. Elevators and revolving stages are operated by electrical energy. The building of the theatre itself is the end-product of a variety of industrial activities from the concrete foundation to the props and scenery.

On the contrary, the Japanese *nō* theatre is a surviving example of premodern theatre in which almost no non-animal energy is used. Take music, for example. In the modern theatre, it is recorded and reproduced through amplifiers and loud-speakers, whereas the voices of the dancer-actor and the chorus and the sound of the instruments played on stage in the *nō* theatre are conveyed *directly* to the audience. Costumes and masks for *nō* plays are made by hand, and the stage itself is built based on traditional principles of carpentry. Although electricity is used for lighting nowadays (which I still object to – in the old days it used to be done by candles and tapers), it is limited to the minimum, never like the elaborate and colorful lighting of the “modern” theatre. *Nō* theatre is pervaded by the spirit of creating something out of human skill and effort. So much so that the *nō* can be said to be the epitome of pre-modern theatre! It is a creation of animal energy.

As the theatre, either in Europe or in Japan, has kept up with the times and has come to use non-animal energy in every facet of its activities, one of the resulting evils is that the faculties of the human body and physical sensibility have been overspecialized to the point of separation. Just as civilization has specialized the job of the eyes and created the microscope, modernization has “dismembered” our physical faculties from our essential selves.

What I am striving to do is to restore the wholeness of the human body in the theatrical context, not simply by going back to such traditional theatrical forms as *nō* and *kabuki*; but, by employing their unique virtues, to create something transcending current practice in the modern theatre.

We need to bring together the physical functions once “dismembered”; to regain the perceptive and expressive abilities and powers of the human body. In doing so, we can maintain culture within civilization.

In my method of training actors, I place special emphasis on the feet, because I believe that consciousness of the body's communication with the ground leads to a great awareness of all the physical junctions of the body.

A basic part of my method of training involves actors stomping on the floor for a certain period of time to rhythmic music, or rather, walking around fiercely beating the floor with the feet in a semi-squatting posture. Then, the moment the music stops, the actors relax their bodies totally, falling on the floor. They lie completely still and quiet. After a while, music starts again, but this time it must be slow and smooth. In accordance with the change in the music, they slowly rise to their feet in any way they like, eventually standing upright, back in a natural posture. This training consists of a pair of contrasting movements, that is, the dynamic and static (motion and rest); in other words, emission and repression of physical power. The purpose of this training is to develop concentration on the body through controlling the breathing.

The essential point of the first half of this training is to keep stomping with a constant force, without swaying the upper half of the body. If the actor does not concentrate his consciousness on his feet, legs and hips which must be well-disciplined, it is impossible for him to continue to stomp consistently, however energetic he may be. Moreover, without the spiritual power and will to control his breathing, the upper half of his body gradually begins to sway and then the rhythm of the stomping becomes irregular. If one beats the floor with one's feet, the force naturally influences the upper half of the body to make it sway. As I get actors to stomp as forcefully as possible, a reaction rises upwards so the more strongly they stomp the more the upper half of their body sways. If they try to minimize the sway, they have to repress the force with their hips. They have to stomp while always being aware of the relationship between upper and lower halves of the body which are pivoted together at the hips.

Of course, emphasizing the fact that the construction of the human body and the balance of the forces which support it are centered on the pelvic region is not thinking unique to my method; almost all the performing arts invariably use such thinking. However, I believe it is specific to my training that first of all the actors are made to feel conscious of this by stomping and beating the ground with their feet. This is derived from my belief that the basic physical sensibility of any stage actor depends on his feet. In our daily life, we tend to disregard the importance of the feet. It is necessary for us to be aware that the human body makes contact with the ground through the feet, that the ground and the human body are inseparable, as the latter is, in fact, part of the former, meaning that when we die we return to the earth. We must make the body, which usually functions unconscious of such a relationship, aware of this fact by creating a strong sense of impact through the beating of the ground with the feet.

This idea of mine has often been said to be quite Japanese, but it is not. Even in classical European ballet, in which the dancers seem to aim at jumping from the ground to soar through the air, the basic physical sensibility consists of a feeling of affinity to the ground.

Again, in traditional Japanese theatrical forms, such as *nō* and *kabuki*, the balance of the two vectors leading towards the sky and the earth, towards the heights and the depths, has been very important in physical expression. However, in the traditional Japanese theatrical forms, these two forces with vectors contrary

to each other meet at the pelvic region, and the energy derived from this tends to radiate horizontally. Therefore, the higher the upper half of the body tries to go, the lower the lower half of the body tries to sink to balance this movement. The feeling that the feet are planted firmly on the ground is thus increased. This is symbolized in such movements as sliding steps (*Suri-ashi*) or stomping (*Ashi-byoshi*) which express the affinity with the earth.

The late Shinobu Origuchi, a prominent Japanese anthropologist and man of letters, said that when examining Japanese performing arts, he found that the performers invariably stomp at some part of the performance and that appearing on the stage in itself signifies the treading down of evil spirits under the ground; the stomping is called *Hembai*. Seen from this point of view, the sliding steps (*Suri-ashi*) in *nō* plays can be considered as preparatory movement to set off the stomping. According to Origuchi, the essence of traditional Japanese dancing is wandering around the stage, which originally signified sanctifying the place by treading down the evil spirits. The series of movements in my training consists of two parts – first, straining the whole body, concentrating the forces at the hips, stomping to the same constant rhythm; and then, after collapsing on the floor to lie still, getting up again to music like a marionette, by extending a calm strength throughout the body. All is achieved by completely changing the quality of what we might call the raw, unconcentrated body of everyday life. That is why many beginners feel that they are just forced to move mechanically and that the delicate nuances of their own bodies disappear. According to my own experience in giving this training, actors in the United States, who are close to realistic acting, tend to feel like that. Even though they begin stomping forcefully and seriously, they soon lose their concentration and their bodies “loosen.” There are some people who watch this and consider my training particularly Japanese; who say that the training is unsuitable for American actors because their legs are long compared with those of the Japanese actors. However, it has nothing to do with the length of the legs or the stamina, but with the discovery of an inner physical sensibility or with the recognition of an inner and profound memory innate to the human body. In other words, it is to do with the ability to uncover this profound physical sensibility and to give it full play. Therefore, it is not necessarily only Japanese actors who are likely to assimilate the aim of my training into their body. Whether in Europe or in Japan, stomping or beating the ground with the feet is a universal physical movement necessary for us to become highly conscious of our own body or to create a “fictional” space, which might also be called a ritualistic space, where we can achieve a personal metamorphosis.

The stomping or beating the floor with the feet originates in ancient Japanese rituals.

Origuchi, in his “Six Lectures on the History of Traditional Japanese Performing Arts,” mentions the Opening Ritual of the Heavenly Stone Wall in the Japanese Creation Myth as the origin of the Sacred Dance (*Kagura*), and talks about the rhythmical dancing to calm down the spirits, which a goddess named Ameno-Uzumeno-Mikoto danced, turning over a wooden tub and stomping on it and striking it with the end of a stick. He says:

Perhaps the tub symbolized the earth. The goddess stomped on it and struck it with a stick while making loud noises; actions supposed to wake up and bring out the soul or

spirit that was believed to be under the tub, whether sleeping or hiding, in order to send it to the unseen sacred body of the god nearby.

He infers that the purpose of the action of stomping and striking is not necessarily to tread down or suppress evil enemies but to arouse their energy in order to use it to activate human life. As a result, an effect similar to that of exorcism is brought about, since by acquiring the spirit of evil it is possible to overcome it. The fact that *nō* and *kabuki* actors often stomp on the stage floor can be regarded as a practice related to this tradition.

The ancient Japanese stages were built on graves or mounds where the souls of the dead were considered to dwell. This has led to the custom where, even now, people hollow out the ground or bury a pot before building a *nō* stage over it. This is not only for the sake of technical effectiveness – the hollow ground makes the sound of stomping resound better – but it is a procedure to create an illusion that the actor can conjure up earth spirits or the spirits of ancestors who have returned to the earth, in order to acquire their energy. The resonance enforces the physical feeling of responding to the spirits. Even today such an illusion is necessary for actors on stage: that the energy of the spirits can be felt through the feet to activate our own bodies is a most natural and valuable illusion for human beings. *Nō* is well blessed because it has continued to cherish this idea right up to the present. Graves and mounds can be regarded as wombs from which we have been born. In that sense the earth is a “Mother” herself. Actors can undertake their roles on the premise that they are connected with all humanity as integrating individuals.

Perhaps it is not the upper half but the lower half of our body through which the physical sensibility common to all races is most consciously expressed; to be more specific, the feet. The feet are the last remaining part of the human body which has kept, literally, in touch with the earth, the very supporting base of all human activities.

(Compiled and translated by Kazako Matsuoka.)

14

MY BODIES

The performer in West Java

Kathy Foley

“The soul changes its abode, the soul changes its abode, changes its garments,” sings the *dalang* (puppetmaster) of the *wayang golek*, the Sundanese puppet theatre of West Java, Indonesia. While chanting, the performer replaces one puppet with another; a refined lady becomes a dynamic warrior; a fanged ogre sports the svelte body of Arjuna, playboy of the Eastern World; a fat, hermaphroditic clown appears in the glorious form of a divinity. The Sundanese do not necessarily feel, as I believe most Americans do, that our individual human body and soul are inextricably bound together till death do us part. This lyric on the movable soul, sung for each of the many transformations that may occur in a performance, tells us as much. It would not occur to the Sundanese to worry, as I did in the back rows of my Catholic school classroom, about the age and state of development my body would have reached when Gabriel’s horn called it forth for eternal reunion with my soul at the world’s end.

Memoirs of a Catholic girlhood may seem an odd beginning to a description of how performers in West Java learn to “multiply” their bodies in performance by learning to play via masks (*topeng*) and puppets (*wayang*). Yet the recollections, I hope, suggest the distance I have traveled in my 15 years of studying the theatre of West Java. Though I speak as an individual, my experiences participate in the cultural distance that exists between a contemporary Westerner’s passionate embrace of the individual body, personal identity, and history as the beginning point from which an artist works to sketch her/his view of the world, and the way the Sundanese and Cirebonese people of West Java work against individual mannerisms, personality, and history to find the range these circumstances of life limit. The distance I have traveled, though it seems vast, is no longer than the three-foot trip up the human spinal column: the stylized characters that each performer learns to dance as masks and manipulate as puppets are, I will reveal, ways of introducing the performer to different energies and balance points that are latent in each human body. Through the one body we inhabit in this life we can, with the help of these puppets or masks and the ideas they encode, embody the whole cosmos.

This trip is introduced to the performer via training that may extend over a semiformal learning period of two to ten years, though childhood exposure prepares the way. Through observation of teachers' performances of mask dance and puppetry and the rote physical replication of the teachers' gestures, with little verbal or written explanation, the student lets the new patterns of movement and vocalization enter *daging lan darah*, his "flesh and blood." Thereafter, the student is expected to understand intuitively the meaning of the practice.

I will discuss the performance practice of West Java in three ways: (1) creating distance; (2) introducing the character types of mask and puppet work; and (3) comprehending the system. The order roughly replicates the process that I experienced when learning the dance and puppet theatre of West Java and corresponds to the way Sundanese performers of today articulate their own artistic development.¹

CREATING DISTANCE

The body of the artist in *topeng*, *wayang*, and virtually all the traditional theatre of West Java,² is ideologically distanced from the bodies of the characters presented in performance. A conventionalized system of movement and vocal stylization defines the characters' sex, age, and nature. Masks and puppets highlight this separation of character from performer. The training, likewise, creates distance between the performer and what is performed. Moving away from real life is the first step of training. Through emulating the teacher in stylized theatrical movement and voice, the student develops a wide range of types which may include a character analogous to her own as well as other more distant characters.

The preference for set characterizations is sustained by the fact that solo puppetry and mask performances (genres benefiting from stylization) are considered the oldest and most important theatres in West Java, as in much of Southeast Asia. Theatre by multiple performers is considered less important, an innovation of the last two or three centuries, and, except in the modern drama experiments of the university-educated elite beginning in the late 1960s, movement and voice characterization in this human theatre are consciously modeled on conventions of the puppet/mask characters.³

As a result of these conventions, the Sundanese do not demand that the gender, age, or even species of the performer and the character coincide – men play women, women play men. Septuagenarians may be singled out for their fine representations of adolescent characters; and demons, gods, and animals are all felt to be splendidly performable by human beings. The proper focus of study in this system is not *wo/mankind*, but the totality of beings that make up the universe. This system recognizes that the particulars of bodily life change with gender, age, and circumstances, but that souls are more comprehensive and in need of fuller exercise: the individual "soul" participates in the overall cosmic power manifest in all things continuing eternally; material "abodes" – bodies – are limited and temporary containers of this force.

Thus, ideological gender equality is part of the system, and men and women have traditionally had access to the roles of dancer, puppeteer, and actor along the north coast of West Java, performing all the varied parts (Foley 1987). Admittedly more specialization of the sexes does emerge in the highlands which are inhabited by Sundanese-speaking people. In this area women have closer association with mask

dance than puppetry, and some genres in which they appear were associated with prostitution in the pre-1945 colonial period (Arjo 1989). Males were and still are the puppeteers in the Sundanese highlands.

Set character types, bodies, masks, or puppets are presented as changeable abodes for the more unitary and enduring power of the performer's soul. This more encompassing energy takes many forms not distinguished by age, gender, or rank. Benedict Anderson's essay "The Idea of Power in Java" is useful for understanding why "object theatre" is so attractive to people in this part of the world:

Power is that intangible, mysterious, and divine energy which animates the universe. It is manifested in every aspect of the natural world, in stones, trees, clouds, and fire, but is expressed quintessentially in the central mystery of life, the process of generation and regeneration. In Javanese traditional thinking there is no sharp division between organic and inorganic matter, for everything is sustained by the same invisible power.

(Anderson 1972: 7)

This power is not of itself good or evil; human, animal, or divine. Though containers change, the power is the same. Energy that in one manifestation may be a human being, may at other points in time inhabit the body of a tiger, or lodge within a tree or atop a mountain after death. The human soul participates in this power as does everything and our individual bodies are tools whereby we can begin to experience and, gradually, understand this power cycling through the world. The dancer or the *dalang* who moves many different figures but is not bound forever to a single one, shows how unitary power activates/is active in the universe. By moving away from oneself in puppetry and mask performance, one better understands the potential of the self: the possibility for positive and/or negative actualizations of the power latent within all beings.

The *topeng* and *wayang* theatre radically separates performer (power) and the performed character (individual manifestation of the power). That is why the training moves first away from the performer's personality only to reintegrate it later in the new system developed through continued practice. It is interesting to note that the American actor trained in the Stanislavsky system usually begins by drawing closer to the self; early acting assignments are often characters close to the performer in age and type, certainly in gender, race, and species.

The Sundanese or Cirebonese dancer, regardless of personality, begins by learning a refined character whose slow, measured movement and melodious, centered voice are considered furthest from the ordinary self. By starting with the character which stretches the average performer most, the system tries to enfranchise him/her with the full potential range. Although individual performers may exhibit a special aptitude for a particular type of character, most consciously abjure cultivating favorites.⁴ I believe this is because they are sensitive to the fact that in mask and puppet theatre performers are not dedicated to any particular type, since this would limit command of the full cycle of characters. The training is designed to give each performer multiple personae, with different vocal, energy, and spatial usages – different "bodies" – so that the performer can ultimately realize that *all* of the masks of the "other" are merely sides of the eternal self. The major masks represent the directions of the world, the ages of life, and the elements of the universe. All of these inhabit each human being.

THE MASKS

The mask and puppet traditions of West Java are based on a sequence of set character types that find their clearest representations in the *topeng babakan* (literally, “masked acts”) of the north coast city of Cirebon.⁵ Four major masked characters are presented in a storyless, six-hour performance by a *dalang*. In times past, this *dalang* would also be the narrator of a masked drama (*wayang topeng*), or sometimes a puppet play using shadow (*wayang kulit*) or wooden rod figures (*wayang cepak*).⁶ The creation of both *topeng* and various forms of *wayang* is attributed by performers to the Javanese holy man Sunan Kalijaga and his eight companions who converted Java to Islam in the late sixteenth century.⁷ Although the exact number of masks that are danced in a performance in any particular village of the Cirebon area varies, the four classes (very refined, semi-refined, warrior, and emotionally uncontrolled) are always in evidence. In the masked performance, dancers usually call the four figures by character names – while in the unmasked dances and puppetry of that area, a word categorizing the personality is more often used to identify the type. In the descriptions that follow I will give the mask names used in the village of Slangit with the name for the Sunda personality type in parentheses. A description of the movement and the vocalization will give a sense of the actual performance of each particular type.

Panji (*lunggah* – very refined) is generally the first mask presented (Figure 14.1). A delicate white mask with an aquiline nose and thin, elongated eyes, this legendary prince Panji is considered by the Javanese to be a great cultural hero. The music that accompanies Panji is complex and the dance, while appearing to be almost stationary when viewed from the outside, demands the most intense internal focus and undivided concentration. In mastering the dance the performer learns subtly to shift the weight of his/her feet from toe to ball so that the character can move imperceptibly toward the audience. The slightest head accents mark the heavy stroke of the gong, while subtle shoulder rolls awaken precise articulations on the spine and activate an unobstructed, if almost unseeable, energy flow that is the character. The otherworldly aura of Panji is immediately apparent to the performer, but not necessarily engaging to the audience. Endo Suanda, a student of Sujana Arja, a major contemporary *topeng* performer in Slangit, notes, “This dance, it seems to me, is more for the *dalang*’s inner satisfaction or meditation than for the audience’s entertainment” (Suanda 1983: 104).

The dancer moves relaxedly in the space defined by his/her natural kinesphere. Panji’s visual focus is directed to the ground about a body length in front of him, almost giving the impression of being recycled back into his body. What I will call the center of gravity,⁸ by which I mean the area of the body where the dancer places the energy focus, is low, in the umbilical area near the base of the spine. This extension of energy toward the earth and the maintenance of a wide, deep *plié* allows all the parts of the body above this center to give a floating impression. A sphere of energy is created, but it slows down time, negates space, and is turned back on itself rather than grabbing the audience. It pushes the dancer into the self and urges him/her to savor the slightest movements, especially those originating where the shoulders and head meet the spine. The vocal placement associated with Panji is created by focusing the sound in the mouth cavity while letting the jaw drop and relax even as the upper jaw raises slightly creating extra space. “Masaman” is a



Fig. 14.1 The refined character mask, associated with Panji, is presented in a topeng dance drama in Cirebon. In this instance, the *dalang* speaks the dialog through a microphone as the performers dance the story. The seated figure in the half mask is a clown character. (Photo by Kathy Foley.)

tuning word which is used for Panji. The speaker first draws out the syllables, placing the voice comfortably, then continues into the slow expansive sentences of Panji's speeches.⁹

Panji is the most relaxed and economical in his energy and space usage, but this very economy of movement, combined with complexity of music, balanced center, and inner quality make Panji's character difficult to achieve. Ideologically Panji is said to represent the ruler, the direction north, *mutmainah* (peace), the color white, the ancestral origins of the Javanese which are associated with mountain tops (a favored abode for ancestral beings), fertility, rain, and semen. Panji is said to be the child newly entered into the world testing out his senses. It is interesting to note that Panji achieves all of these images associated with high, eternally flowing fertility, by keeping his center low. What goes down, must float up. I associated Panji with the head, since the movement directs the mind up into itself and traditional imagery

reinforces this interpretation: north and mountains are associated with the head. The island of Java is perceived as a body with the northern mountains comprising its head and the southern ocean its nether regions.

Pamindo (*ladak* – semi-refined) is the second mask, with a white face and curly dark hair. The movement is dynamic, nimble and joyful, while remaining refined and maintaining a center of gravity in the navel region. Shoulders swivel, floor pattern curves, and wrists undulate with a full sense of flow. The character is said to be adolescent, a coquettish female,¹⁰ rejoicing in the delights of her world. This mask is frequently used to represent princesses. She giggles, fixes betel leaf, combs her hair, pretends to peer into a mirror, using stylized gestures to connote these actions. She sits with legs extended in front and softly jackknifes her body with the arms extended high over her head, and seems to fall asleep. Then, ever so gradually, she rises, unfolds her body and arms until, head up and arms to either side, she seems a bird soaring upward and forward.

Indeed the movements from this seated part to the end of the dance often have names of birds (usually swan or crane) and are felt to be imitative of these creatures. It seems possible that the sequence from sitting to soaring is a vestige of more ritual performances which connect birds and ancestral spirits in a wide area of the Pacific.¹¹ These bird associations are felt to be significant by performers who relate Pamindo to a bird, saying hers is the oldest topeng dance from which the others derive (see Rogers-Aguiniga 1986).

The character focuses on the audience, looking at the ground about two body lengths in front of herself; she luxuriates in, but does not confront, the viewer's gaze directly. The vocal resonance associated with Pamindo is two notes of the gamelan scale above the rounded vocalization of the Panji character. To create the voice the performer directs the stream of sound toward the hard palate and the upper teeth. The tuning sound which produces this resonance is "ke-ke-ke," and a quick breathless pace is used for delivering the dialog. Pamindo is associated with the west, *supiyah* (possessiveness), the color yellow, and is felt to be the individual wandering here and there looking for her mission in the world. Pamindo is refined like Panji, but her higher center allows for more quixotic use of space and time and for greater audience interaction. While Panji is firmly aligned with the clearest consciousness of self and head, I associate Pamindo's character with possibilities that are slightly dangerous but exciting, the floating possibilities that twisting and turning and total concentration can allow to flow free. The association of Pamindo with the west links her with sunset, death, and the difficult but exciting energy of the left hand.

The next major character type to appear is Tumenggung (*punggawa* – official, warrior), a prime minister whose rose-colored mask has a curling moustache. His use of space and time is more direct and energetic. His visual focus is directly toward the audience. Wide strides are his customary step, and quickly repeating gongs make it easy for the dancer to signal transitions from one movement sequence to the next. The complex patterns of movement (and implied complexity of thought) that characterize Panji and Pamindo are simplified. The deep, throaty, reverberating voice associated with Tumenggung is attained by tightening the folds of the vocal cords and utilizing the chest as the major resonator. The speech is considered, its delivery slow. The center of gravity for this character is higher on the spine, in the back of the solar plexus, and this pulling up of energy allows for freer

movement of the legs which swing wide from the hip joint permitting Tumenggung to cover ground quickly. His big movements command wider audience attention. Tumenggung is felt to be a male character of 40, in the prime of life. He is associated with the east, black, *luwamah* (determination), growth, and strength. Though with his high center he is less firmly planted than the earlier characters, his forceful energy gives the impression he accomplishes more in the immediate moment. Tumenggung's connection with the east and forcefulness link him with the power of the right hand.



Fig. 14.2 Klana, an emotionally uncontrolled demon king, is the final mask presented in each performance. Sujana Arja dances the role. (Photo by Kathy Foley.)

Finally the mask Klana (*anglara murka* – emotionally uncontrolled) appears (Figure 14.2). His red face and fangs denote the emotional uncontrol that is frowned upon in Java and associated with ogres and demons. Klana is Panji's opponent and is usually enamored of Pamindo. Klana is a man in the throes of death, but longing greedily for life. Short, sharp shocks of movement, jumps, and kicks characterize his dance. His visual focus skims over the audience's heads. Vectors of force radiate from Klana's center of gravity, high on his spine near the top of the chest, and slam into the audience as Klana claims a universe of space. The nasal resonators are activated in creating his implosive, quick voice which rises and swoops over an octave, utilizing a tessitura of *madenda*, a minor key that shares only three notes with the five-toned *salendro* musical scale adhered to by the other characters in their talking. The mood song which introduces Klana's arrival gives a sense of his character:

The crying of Dasamuka is in the wind,
a fight in the air,
his chest was pecked and it cracked,
Lives again after he dies,
remembers the incantation of Pancasona.

(Suanda 1983: 142)¹²

Klana's scattershot energy focuses in the high chest. This allows his limbs to move relatively broadly and freely underneath.¹³ Much of the movement activates the spine where the neck meets the head. This joint is jerked and wrenched during his dance, especially at the end of the slow opening passage as the dancer prepares to put on Klana's mask. This is the point in the dance that the "warm up" ends and the performer is felt to "put on" this demon king character.

Klana interacts most dynamically with the audience, laughing at them, tossing a cloth to them, touching a child. Klana is associated with the south, the regions beneath, *amarah* (passion), death, menstruation, and fire. Klana's high center of gravity allows explosive energy to pour forth. Klana is the climax of the performance, and the obverse of Panji's eternally recycled conservation of energy. Klana is technically the easiest to perform. His movements are less precise than the prior characters and, since the musical cycles are quick, the dancer can change movement sequences almost at will. But he is ideologically the hardest to control, the most potentially dangerous. While seasoned performers remain in control, unpracticed performers court dangerous trancelike states where the character overpowers the performer. Klana evokes the volcanic and is apt to explode.

Ironically, by activating the top of the spine and shaking the head in swift, sharp movements, and by slamming the voice against the top of the head, the deepest emotions can pour forth. Klana is born from the depths and waits until the dancer releases him by opening at the top of the spine.¹⁴ The Sundanese are in no rush to do this. The dancer spends the first hours of each performance as Panji, Pamindo, and Tumenggung. Likewise the early years of topeng learning train the performer to focus on the lower end of the spine.

A refined character related to Panji or Pamindo is introduced first (Figure 14.3). The choice seems odd when compared to much Western training where freeing the natural voice and activating the deep psychophysical system of the actor often advocates large energy and emotional stretches early in training to break down



Fig. 14.3 Young dancers in Losari village near Cirebon execute Pamindo movements. This refined character is customarily studied first. (Photo by Kathy Foley.)

barriers which prevent the performer from understanding her/his “natural” state.¹⁵ Such training, it seems to me, was especially prominent in the 1970s when Grotowski-influenced physical exercises, Lessac’s call, and American variants of Stanislavsky-influenced emotional memory were introduced to me. In Sunda these big movements and emotions are what the performer is asked to activate last – probably because they are considered the easiest to achieve and the most difficult to control. Starting with Klana would leave both the student mastering the system and a performance building toward a climax with no place to go. To begin with Klana misunderstands the significance that the system ascribes to this powerful material. The traditional training system asks the novice to begin with what is most complex, most stationary, most subtle, and most difficult.

In both the past and the present, the mask with its set image of a type, like the unchanging representations in the puppet theatre, are nonverbal tools that release the body to find the movement, voice, and idea of a character. Endo Suanda, a noted dancer of today’s generation, discusses his different strategies in learning topeng which progressed from rational analysis, to emotive response, to letting the mask move him:

Most of the movements that I saw or felt, I could not analyze how to do, as they were too small, too subtle or too quick. So finally I stopped trying to analyze the physical design of the movement, and instead focused my attention on absorbing the sensuality or expression of the whole movement while I was studying or practicing. After a while I knew that I moved my head unconsciously. [. . .] Because the mask is worn it makes

the head of the dancer move. [. . .] Wearing a mask means having a different face, so it will definitely change his expression and create different movements.

(Suanda 1983: 203–4)

Irawati Durban Arjo, another noted topeng performer, agrees that the mask comes to dance the dancer: “After wearing the mask, I feel stronger. You have to be sensitive to it first and it will expand into everything you move. I can feel more of the character when I wear the mask. Klana is very powerful and can act as he wants” (Arjo 1988). By opening the body to the influence of evocative traditional images and following the prescribed order of characters, the dance and its meaning become part of the performer’s body.

COMPREHENDING THE SYSTEM

The cycle of dances is a trip around the periphery of the body, from head (Panji) to left hand (Pamindo) to right hand (Tumenggung) to gut (Klana), while the center of gravity moves directly up the spine from low (Panji) to high (Klana). Opposition is inherent in these simultaneously occurring voyages. Panji is ideologically at the top (head) and actually at the bottom (lower spine), while Klana is ideologically at the bottom (gut) and actually at the top (upper spine). The tension between the two points pushes the mind toward the idea of center which plays an important part in Southeast Asian thinking (see Errington 1983). Pamindo and Tumenggung are closer to the central point on the spinal journey, but not precisely there. Indeed, the dancer is invited to find this point herself, or in some villages in a fifth character, Rumiang, whose movement is between Pamindo and Tumenggung in forcefulness and is introduced to pinpoint the central focus. The reason that the Rumiang mask is lacking in some areas may be that it is redundant, a replication of what the dancer is who knows all his/her powers – centered.

Though different “bodies” in terms of rhythm and movement dynamics seem to appear with each dance, the sum of the characters always adds up to *one* person’s moving body. The impact of the training is to create a repertory of beings that force the performer to know his/her many potential bodies. These characters are emotionally the different aspects of his/her soul, peace (Panji), possessiveness (Pamindo), power (Tumenggung), and passion (Klana); different aspects of the social order, the ruler (Panji), the princess (Pamindo), the warrior (Tumenggung), the opponent (Klana); conceptually, an accelerated trip through his/her life cycle from birth (Panji), through adolescence (Pamindo), adulthood (Tumenggung), to death (Klana); a preview of the cycle that each individual will repeatedly pass through in his/her regeneration from a god-ancestor showering benefit on the world (Panji), to a youth dreaming worlds that might be (Pamindo), to a person building worlds that must be (Tumenggung), to a demon-ancestor rumbling dangerously beneath the volcanic earth (Klana), waiting for the eruption which will mark the transition into Panji once more. It is clear that the multiple movement possibilities and layering of imagery provides rich stimulation for the muscles of the performer’s body and mind. Traditional performers of topeng or wayang scoff at the need to forge new idioms of movement or theatre and are apt to assert, as did one dalang I interviewed, that “Everything is in the wayang already” (Sukarya 1977).

Rather than explore the many possibilities of this system, I wish merely to note two alternative transformations, animal and ecological, that are implied rather than stated. These permutations are evocative in that they go beyond what Western thinking or acting ordinarily invites as a transformation of the human body and/or social order. Topeng invites us to experience a bird/snake dichotomy by highlighting Pamindo and Klana, and a tree/mountain permutation by dancing the whole sequence. While these changes may seem removed from the human body, actually they begin and end in the body.

Bird and the Snake

Though the system presently yields four character types, this is really an elaboration on what may be an older pairing of two. In many ways, Panji and Tumenggung, while ideologically important as positive images, do not lie at the heart of topeng. The dance really focuses more on the other two characters, Pamindo and Klana, who are more integral to the performance. In villages such as Losari near Cirebon the Panji dance is not done; the Pamindo mask is called “Panji.” In a variety of introductory mask dance performances of the Sundanese area, Panji is missing while Pamindo, Klana, and sometimes Tumenggung remain. Dancers such as Sujana Aria aver that Pamindo’s is the oldest dance, the source of the other dances. Indeed, a marked choreographic symmetry exists between Pamindo’s and Klana’s dances. The former, I believe, shows us our “bird” possibility, while the latter teaches us the energy of the “snake.”

As noted before, the Pamindo dance has many movements which are imitative of a bird. This may correspond to the importance of the bird in a wide area (see Holt 1967: 106). Pamindo incarnates the possibilities of the human in motion; the flightlike potentiality of this dance in its extreme becomes the sleep-walking trance of female mediums found in roughly the same area as topeng.¹⁶ The lowered center of gravity, coupled with twisting, turning motions, brings the body as close as it can come to flying. In Sunda and Java the images of birds are often found on dance headdresses. Most characters in dance dramas and many female dances in non-narrative dances have eagle or peacock designs on their leather headgear. This costume, in addition to marking a now defunct religious heritage which associated the eagle with Garuda, the vehicle of the Hindu god Vishnu, is a performed assertion that when we lower our center of gravity we all can “fly.”

The Klana dance exhibits a jerkier whipping of the spine, an energy related to a high center of gravity which stimulates the head-neck connection. I link this Klana dance to *nagas*, mythical snakes that dwell in the earth, which in Indonesian as well as Indian mythology are the opponents of Garuda. Elsewhere I have noted that jumps and jerks characterize male trance performance in this area (Foley 1985); I think a change of consciousness is activated by hyperstimulation of the nervous system. This technique of transformation differs radically from the flightlike feeling of the Pamindo dancer. Klana’s jerking spine, with special emphasis on the head-neck connection, while clearly not a trance performance, may be similar to trance in that this movement technique releases the emotions of the gut – sexuality, hunger, greed, power. Such emotions are associated with *nagas*, coiled beneath the earth creating fertility but, if uncontrolled, threatening chaos. Although not explicit in topeng, the naga theme is implicitly evoked. *Naga seser*, “the naga defeated,” is the

wide plié position found in the topeng choreography of Losari village. In Arja's Klana, the dancer takes out a dagger (*kris*) worn at the waist and points it in front of him as he reaches a highpoint in the dance. The wavy-bladed knife is patterned to look like a snake, and both naga and dagger are associated with male sexual potency. The floor pattern zig-zags back and forth in this sequence, reiterating the naga theme.¹⁷

When I do Klana, especially after enjoying the birdlike flight of Pamindo, I have the sense of my subcortical consciousness being jerked to life, as if Klana awakened some sense-memory of my neural column's reptilian prehistory. Klana is naga power incarnate, and yet, paradoxically, this power is activated by pushing the focal point of the dancer up the spinal cord.¹⁸ The bird-snake identification is important to humans far beyond Java. It is widespread through the world and is often said to have shamanic origins. Even Catholicism gave me images of holy ghosts in bird bodies bringing ecstasy to Mary and snakes slithering through Eden seducing Eve. Yet the religious training I received encouraged me to see these mythical creatures outside of me, manipulating me. The study of topeng has given me power over them by showing me that they are parts of me. I dance these creatures to life in my body, identifying myself with the animal world.

The Tree/Mountain

One last figure from the puppet theatre I wish to relate to topeng is the flat leather puppet called the *kayon* (tree) or *gunungan* (mountain) used as a multipurpose tool. Representing the creation of the cosmos, the kayon dance opens each performance. It is placed at the center of the playing space when the dalang narrates between scenes, marking the structural divisions of the story as a curtain might in Western theatre. It is used as an all-purpose set piece in the play, becoming now a rock, next a cloud, then a throne, a gate, a weight. The kayon usually has a winged gate at the bottom which is guarded by two ogres. Behind the gate is a pool; two strong animals (tigers, bulls, etc.) stand facing each other at the base of a tree that grows in the garden. A snake may twine round the trunk which branches where the face or faces of a protective demon, a Kala, appears. High at the top, the tree culminates in a lotus. The imagery and mysticism that surrounds the kayon is very rich and I will merely hint at some of its aspects.

The kayon represents the cosmic whole that makes up the world: the Indonesian version of the world tree and/or mountain found in the iconography of many cultures. It can become all things in a performance because it is all things, and it reminds Javanese viewers that trees and mountains are the abodes of gods and ancestral souls. Even today, banyan trees with their complicated root systems and far-spreading canopies are the focal point of many villages, while sacred volcanos continue to bring fertility and destruction. The kayon invites Indonesians to contemplate participation in larger cycles than humans experience in one life span. It invites them, too, to expand their thinking about the human body in a way related to the idea of power discussed earlier. A tree or a mountain, rooted in the earth, extending through the world we inhabit, reaching to the heavens is an axis binding the different layers of life's eternally circling energy. In death one's body is placed in the ground; in a dream one's spirit soars above. But the experience of these other states is also available at any moment. The energy of the macrocosm – represented by

the tree or mountain extending from the underworld to our world to the heavens – is not really different from our own personal energy. The same unseen power uses the tree and the mountain, as it does us, as abodes. Although this perspective might seem mystical and esoteric from the Western point of view, it is an ecology of the mind which the traditional Javanese worldview finds simple and pragmatic.

The figures of topeng appropriately appear on the kayon, this cosmic whole, in nonhuman forms. The winged gate represents the female – associated with both the womb that carries each of us to the world, and the winged bird I have linked to Pamindo. The facing animals are figures of our strength and can be associated with the forceful Tumenggung. The Kala head's demonic representation which often rises above the snake is identified with Klana. The lotus at the top is the mind's fulfillment, associated with Panji the baby who, self-realized, descends into the world again and again. Though the kayon is a tree or a mountain, it is also a human. The tree is our spine and the snake is our kundalini energy rising from the genitals, snapping into consciousness once we can confront that point at the top where Klana, our protective Kala head, prods us to full consciousness.¹⁹ The kayon is the "mask" that the dalang holds in front of him/herself when s/he delivers the narration. It is the "puppet" s/he hides behind. Yet it is also his/her spine; s/he is the tree, the mountain, the multiple bodies/energies at play in the world. Topeng and wayang with their typology of characters are ways of guiding first the performer and then, through that performer, each spectator toward these wider identifications. A simple trip up the spine, moving from a low center using minimal space and a comfortable vocal range toward higher intensities of energy, wider spaces, and exploding vocalities. At the same time topeng and wayang demand a recognition of the different tendencies of different body parts, the Panji in the head, the Klana in the gut, the quirky Pamindo of the left hand, and the powerful Tumenggung of the right.

A mood song that opens most puppet performances alerts us:

The kayon is a screen that masks the god,
masks the one who executes the performance.
The puppets breathe through the soul of the dalang.
The dalang breathes his soul into the puppets.
The kayon screens the unseen power behind.

The unseen power is the dalang, the puppetmaster, who is all the puppets at once. How odd that I, who felt bound to one body from here to hereafter, should sing this lyric. The audience does not really know what it means. They see only the bright kayon and the glittering puppets whose faces resemble Panji, Pamindo, Tumenggung, and Klana. They think I am telling stories about long ago and far away – fascinating stories indeed – but not the real story. Topeng and wayang teach me to be the force not bound to my normal body or history. I have many bodies. I participate in both human emotions and volcanic explosions. By exercising my changeability, I am no longer locked into a one-dimensional view of the world – which is associated with an individual puppet, mask, or life. Performance is a way of speeding up my life cycle, or the many life-death-life cycles, so that I can travel from body to soil to reintegration. By speeding up the process I participate actively in the workings of the cosmos. I, the dalang, manipulate the different entities and forces and finally reach an artistic balance.²⁰ The topeng, the kayon, the cosmos are my bodies.

15

“ON THE EDGE OF A BREATH, LOOKING”¹

Cultivating the actor’s bodymind through Asian martial/meditation arts

Phillip B. Zarrilli

[An] important thing to remember is that an actor must concentrate on . . . his whole body . . . [J]ust as a musician has to exercise his fingers every day, so an actor has to exercise his body almost to the point of overcoming it, that is, being in complete control of it.

(Ryszard Cieślak in Torzecka 1992: 261)

As long ago as 1973 Robert Benedetti summed up at least one of the goals of “serious actor-training programs” as attempting to help students to discover “stillness at the center” because it “relates to those most fundamental problems of concentration and relaxation” which the actor must actualize on stage (464, 467). Reflecting on a demonstration performance by Beijing Opera actress Yen Lu Wong, Benedetti noted how the American actor

often tends to be at the mercy of his [*sic*] own energy because his technique is incapable of encompassing it fully; he has to “work himself up” to high energy levels, while [Yen Lu Wong] carries with [her] a powerful but balanced energy source which [she] taps freely as needed.

(Benedetti 1973: 464)²

Yen Lu Wong told Benedetti how throughout her prolonged training period her “main focus was [. . .] on maintaining ‘tranquility’” – a state of performance actualization which A.C. Scott summed up as “‘standing still while not standing still’” (Benedetti 1973: 463).³

This essay is about both the thought and the actualization in practice of the notion of “standing still while not standing still” through intensive psycho-physiological training in Asian martial/meditation arts developed by A.C. Scott as early as 1963, and in collaboration with me since 1979. It explores both aspects of this seeming paradox in all its complexities, that is, how the actor learns simultaneously to “stand still,” yet “not stand still.” It specifically traces the practice and discourse of preparing and training actors through immersion in

Asian martial/meditation arts toward a psychophysical state of readiness, impulse, and action where the performer is (1) centered, but free to spontaneously move from this “center” anywhere/anytime; (2) balanced, yet able to appear imbalanced; (3) controlled, yet simultaneously in a state of released/fluid “flow” (4) still and ready, but emanating potential power and movement in that state of stillness. I discuss how this state of readiness is applied in acting. Implicit in this approach is the assumption that acting is a psychophysiological process in which it is necessary to first cultivate the actor’s bodymind in order to develop the awareness and sensibilities necessary to fully embody, enact, and/or inhabit the actor’s tasks in performance.⁴

FROM “IN-DISCIPLINE” TO “DISCIPLINE” AND CULTIVATION: (RE)DISCOVERING THE BODY AND MIND THROUGH PRACTICE

To speak of training the actor to be able to “stand still while not standing still” is necessarily to speak of a process which transforms not only the practitioner’s relationship to his body and mind in practice but also how one conceptualizes that relationship. I begin with my own experience of this process of transformation to illustrate the common-place confusions as well as the idiosyncrasies characteristic of this twofold process. My story takes place between the fields of play on which many middle-aged American males of my age were enculturated to particular practices and paradigms of the body-mind relationship, and Kerala, South India’s *kalaris* or gymnasia-cum-temples and stages where at least some practitioners of the traditional martial art, *kalarippayattu*, and dance-drama, *kathakali*, are enculturated to a quite different understanding and practice of the body-mind relationship as they undergo their intensive yearly disciplines of body training and perform their arts.⁵

Before I first travelled to India in 1976 I had very little movement or dance training. My experience of my body was based on a variety of sports: baseball, track, wrestling, basketball, soccer, and (American) football. I assumed that they promoted good health while making me assertive and self-confident. But I also intuitively knew that especially my high school football training promoted aggressive and potentially violent attitudes and behaviour. While being psychophysically shaped by my training in sports, I was philosophically, ethically, and ideologically becoming a pacifist.

But my body remained separate, that is, it would not be “pacified.” It had been shaped by a culture of the body which assumed an overarching and directive “will” which, through sheer determination and/or aggression, could shape the body *per se*, and/or make use of the body to impose that will on someone/something else. Consequently, I unthinkingly either “forced” my body to shape itself to a “discipline” such as football, and/or I tried to use that body as a means to an end, that is, for “winning.” My “sports” body was the objective or “neutral” biomedical, physiological body observable from the outside. As a “thing” to be mastered, male culture gave me permission to keep this body sequestered and separate from my beliefs and values. Separate from my biomedical/sports body, I inhabited an-“other” body – the “personal” and private body which was a repository of my feelings. It too existed in a state of tension with my beliefs and ethical values, and also remained separate from my biomedical/sports body.

My (separate) mind was manifest in my “will” to mastery, in my reflexive consciousness which could watch my “sports” body from the outside, and in my

beliefs and values which attempted, through my active will, to impose themselves on either or both bodies. None of these fragmented experiences of my body-mind nor their implicitly dualistic paradigms helped me to inhabit and/or understand my body-mind in a way that led me to achieve an integration between them which, at least intellectually, I eventually sought both in performance and in life.

Consequently, when I first went to India in 1976, I was totally unprepared for the psychophysiological experiences I was to undergo. For my first six months I was immersed in studying *kathakali* dance-drama for approximately seven hours of intensive daily training at the Kerala Kalamandalam under M.P. Sankaran Namboodiri. For an additional three months I began four hours of daily training in the closely related martial art, *kalaripayattu*, under Gurukkal Govindankutty Nayar of the C.V.N. Kalari, Thiruvananthapuram.⁶

Over the months and years of observing masters of both *kathakali* and *kalaripayattu*, I began to notice the "ease" with which they embodied their incredibly dynamic arts, manifesting an extraordinary focus and power. In *kathakali* that power is manifest in the full-bodied aesthetically expressive forms through which the actor channels his energy as he realizes each mood (*bhava*) appropriate to the dramatic context.⁷ In *kalaripayattu* that focus and power is manifest not only in performance of the fully embodied forms of exercise but also in the fierce and potentially lethal force of a step, kick, or blow (Zarrilli 2000b; 2000c).

When masters of either the dance-drama or martial art performed their complex acrobatic combinations of steps, kicks, jumps, turns, and leaps, as Govindankutty Nayar liked to describe it, they "flowed like a river." At that time, my body did anything *but* flow. The serpentine, graceful, yet powerfully grounded fluidity of movement seemed an unapproachable state of embodiment. My overt physical ineptitude was matched by my equal naivete about how to learn through my body, and how that body was related to my mind. I physically "attacked" both *kathakali* and *kalaripayattu* exercises. I tried to force the exercises into my body; my body into the forms. I was determined to make myself learn each exercise, no matter how difficult. There in the Indian *kalari* was my Akron, Ohio, Buchtel Griffin high school football coach yelling at me:

Zarrilli, hit him harder. Get up off your ass and let's see you move! And I mean really move this time! Get up and do it again – right, this time!⁸

Given this approach, my body was full of tension and my mind was flooded with my aggressive attempt to control and assert my will.

Gradually, after years of practice, the relationship of my body and mind in practice and my understanding of that relationship began to alter. When demonstrating the martial art or when acting, I found myself able more consistently to enter a state of readiness and awareness – I no longer "attacked" the activity or the moment. My body and mind were being positively "disciplined," that is, for engagement in the present moment, not *toward* an end or goal. My tensions and inattentions gradually gave way to sensing myself simultaneously as "flowing" yet "power-full," "centered" yet "free," "released" yet "controlled." I was beginning to actualize what Benedetti described as a "stillness at my center." I was learning how to "stand still."

Simultaneously, through the long process of repetition of basic forms of practice, I also began to sense a shift in the quality of my relationship to my

bodymind in exercise or on stage – I was discovering an “internal energy” which I was gradually able to control and modulate physically and vocally whether in performance or when extending my breath or “energy” through a weapon when delivering a blow. I was moving from a concern with external form to awareness of the “internal,” dynamic dimension of my psychophysiological relationship to my body/mind *in practice*. I was able to enter a state of heightened awareness of and sensitivity to both my bodymind/breath in action, as well as the immediate environment. I was simultaneously beginning to discover how *not* to stand still, while standing still.

In my case, I emphasize *beginning* because every day of practice in India I could watch a master such as Govindankutty Nayar actualize this optimal state of “standing still while not standing still.” When he would perform the *kalaripayattu* lion pose (Figure 15.1), behind the stasis, that moment of stillness when he fully assumed and held the position, was a palpable inner “fullness” reflected in his concentrated gaze and in his readiness to respond to the immediate



Fig. 15.1 Gurukkal Govindankutty Nayar of the C.V.N. Kalari, Thiruvananthapuram, performs one of *kalaripayattu*'s poses, the “lion.” Here “the body becomes all eyes.”

environment. A Malayalam folk expression best describes this state of a *kalaripayattu* master for whom, like Lord Brahma, the thousand-eyed, "the whole body becomes an eye (*meyyu kannakuka*)."⁸ Simultaneously, I sensed a shift in the relationship between my values and beliefs as they worked their way into my body and behavior.

However, with these changes, I found it difficult to describe my experience in language that neither objectified nor, as in the above paragraphs, romantically subjectified and/or reified my own experience, applying to it a thin gloss of self-congratulation. In face-to-face encounters and/or demonstrations of techniques with students, actors, and/or other teachers (more than in narratives such as this), I can display this dynamic "connection" through the bodymind, and then demystify it by stepping out of it, and/or literally commenting on it.

TRAINING TOWARD READINESS

When A.C. Scott first encountered American actors in 1963, he observed how

I was worried by the casual naturalism [American acting students] regarded as acting, impressed by the vitality they needlessly squandered, staggered by their articulate verbosity on the psychological nature of theatre, and dismayed by their fragile concentration span, which manifested itself in a light-hearted attitude toward discipline that seemed to arise from an inability to perceive that a silent actor must still remain a physical presence on both the stage and the rehearsal floor.

(Scott 1993: 52)

Responding to this encounter, Scott began to use *taijiquan* to train actors "long before the present interest in Asian physical training forms had swept over America" (1993: 52).⁹ Implicit in Scott's use of *taijiquan* as an actor-training discipline was not only a rejection of American actors' exclusive attention to a psychologically/behaviorally-based paradigm of acting, but also an attempt to actualize an alternative paradigm.

In this, Scott was inspired by Jacques Copeau, by his own experience of practicing *taijiquan*, and by the religio-philosophical assumptions which inform such traditional Asian practices. In 1913 Copeau, with Charles Dullin and Louis Jouvet in his troupe of eleven, retired to the French countryside to train and prepare a company and repertoire. For Copeau, training must take place prior to whatever leads to performance. It is a period during which the actor should discover an optimal condition or state of "readiness," that is, a state of "repose, calm, relaxation, detente, silence, or simplicity" (Cole and Chinoy 1970: 220) like Benedetti's "stillness at the center." To accomplish this state of motionlessness, Copeau wanted to develop a form of body training for the actor which was not that of the athlete for whom the body remains an instrument or tool, but rather a training through which "normally developed bodies [become] capable of adjusting themselves, *giving themselves over* to any action they may undertake." It is a state in which the actor has mastered "motionlessness" and is *ready* for what comes next. Once a state of motionlessness and readiness has been actualized, actors should begin all of their work from this state of readiness and not "from an artificial *attitude*, a bodily, mental, or vocal *grimace*." Whatever they do should be done with "simplicity and good faith" in a state of "sincerity," that is, "a feeling of calm and power, of

identity, that allows the artist . . . at the same time to be possessed by what he is expressing and to direct its expression” (Cole and Chinoy 1970: 220).

In addition to giving oneself over completely in the moment to an action, as part of this corporeal training, Copeau hoped that the actor would simultaneously develop “an internal state of awareness peculiar to the movement being done.” Barba (Barba and Savarese 1991) correctly calls such abilities “extra-daily” skills. Copeau, despite continuous experiments, remained dissatisfied with the results of his experiments: “I do not know how to describe, much less obtain in someone else, that state of good faith, submission, humility, which . . . depends upon . . . proper training” (Cole and Chinoy 1970: 221). Inspired by Copeau, Jean-Louis Barrault and Etienne Decroux developed Corporeal Mime (Chapter 10) and Scott began to use martial arts as disciplines of training.

Expanding on Copeau’s vision and Scott’s model, I guide actors through (1) a repeatable set of intensive psychophysiological techniques (breath control exercises, *t’ai chi ch’uan*, *kalaripayattu*, and selected yoga exercises) which cultivates the bodymind toward a state of readiness, and through which the participant discovers an alternative psychophysiological relationship to the bodymind-in-action; (2) in a special space set aside for this work in which an appropriate atmosphere for serious training can be maintained; (3) taking sufficient time to allow participants to discover a new awareness of their bodies in and through “time”; and (4) providing an opportunity to actualize this psychophysiological paradigm of acting through the body via application of the training principles and techniques to structured improvisations, acting problems, and production work. This psychophysiological approach is taught through intensive training workshops, or ongoing training at my own studio or as part of a year-long course of study.¹⁰ After sufficient preparatory training, the exercise regime can be used as an intensive one-hour preparation for rehearsals and performances. Even though explanations are kept to a minimum when teaching the basic exercises, instructions and corrections are important. Therefore, the following summary of the process of training includes a brief example of the kind of language I use when introducing students to the breath control exercise which begins their training.

Dressed in loose-fitting exercise clothes to allow them to move freely and keep warm, participants enter the training space by stepping with their right foot and touching with their right hand the floor, their forehead, and chest – an act intended to remind them to leave everything outside the training space except the work that is to come. Participants begin a series of *taijiquan* and *kalaripayattu* breath control exercises standing with legs at shoulder-width, hands at their sides, eyes focused straight ahead.

Keeping the knees flexed, and feet rooted to the ground through the soles of the feet, focus the external gaze straight ahead, and allow the “inner eye” to focus on the breath. Keeping the mouth closed, follow the path of the breath on the inhalation, tracking its path through the nose, and down, to the region below the navel. As the breath “arrives” in the region of the navel, let it “fill out” expanding the diaphragm. Keeping the “inner eye” focused on the breath, follow the exhalation from the navel up through the torso, out through the nose, all the time keeping the sense of the breath’s connection to the navel region as the diaphragm contracts. If there is a distraction, acknowledge it, then bring focus back to attention by specifically following the breath.

A series of other more complex breath-control exercises follows in which simple movements of the arms are coordinated with inhalations/exhalations – all the while simultaneously keeping attention fixed on a point of external focus and keeping the “inner eye” focused on tracking inhalations/exhalations to and from the region below the navel and by extension from the navel region through the remainder of the body, that is, into the ground through the soles of the feet, out through the arms/hands, up along the spine through the top of the head.

Included are selected yoga exercises in which coordination of breath with complex movements is emphasized. Particular attention continues to be paid to the circulation of the breath during exercise, and the necessary support in the pelvic region; thus, even when extending the leg backward while simultaneously arching the back on an inhalation during performance of an extended yoga sequence (*suryanamaskar*), the student must develop an intuitive awareness of and connection to the lower abdomen, to and from which the breath travels and which provides the support necessary in hip/thigh region to perform the exercise correctly.¹¹

These simple-to-state but difficult-to-actualize principles of focus/concentration (on the breath *and* on an external point), coordination of breath with movement, and support/centering (in the hips/navel with a natural alignment of the spine) constitute a set of primary discourses of practice. They are applied throughout the two-hour training regime as it progresses through other preliminary exercises, including slow balancing exercises, *kalaripayattu*'s animal poses (Figure 15.2), a cycle of vocal exercises (based on a variety of sources including Japanese *kyogen*), a twenty minute non-stop sequence of short form wu-style *taijiquan*, *kalaripayattu*'s *vanakkam* or “salutation” exercise (combining breath control with a sequence of poses connected by steps – performed in slow motion similar to the quality of *t'ai chi ch'uan*), and penultimately a full set of vigorous *kalaripayattu* body-control exercises including poses, kicks, steps, jumps, and combined full-body exercises (*meippayattu*). Each day's work concludes with repetition of selected breath-control exercises as a “cool down.”

Making use of both *taijiquan* and *kalaripayattu* allows participants to explore two corporeal disciplines which require them to garner and manifest their energy in two qualitatively different modes of expression. The *kalaripayattu*, while beautiful in its flow, has sharp, strong, percussive, immediate releases of energy in some of its kicks, jumps, and steps. In contrast, the *taijiquan* is soft, circular, yet behind that “softness” is “power” and a grounded strength. As students progress through the training, the contrast in the quality of energy in the two disciplines helps them to begin to understand intuitively the potentially rich expressive possibilities open to them through their bodies.

The atmosphere I try to foster is one of quiet focus on the specific work at hand. Participants are expected to keep focused and concentrated *in* each moment. I occasionally remind participants:

- 1 *not* to “space out,” “zone out,” or attempt to relax – rather, their task is, through specificity of focus, to enter a state of concentratedness *in* the moment which is not energy-less, but energy-full or *energized*;
- 2 *not* to push or attempt to find some mystical or spiritual “something” in what they are doing, that is, they are to assume that what they “find” will come out of

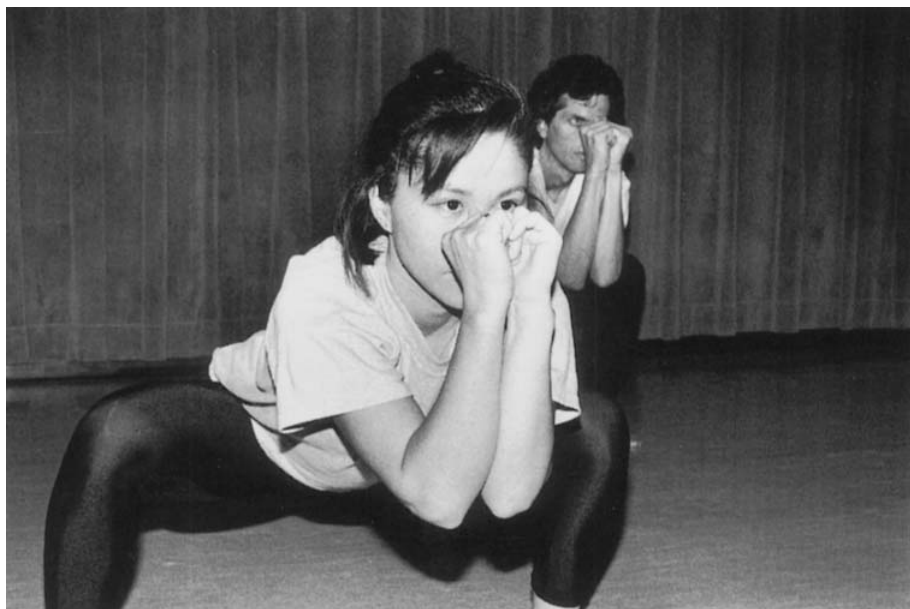


Fig. 15.2 Soogi Kim Chow, teacher at the Korean National Academy of the Arts, Seoul, and Kevin Brown perform the elephant pose – one of the basic exercises requiring breath control and abdominal support. (Photograph by Phillip Zarrilli.)

the *specificity* of their embodied relationship to the exercise in the moment of its performance;

- 3 *not* to work so hard at attempting to find or keep focus that they are distracted by their “trying,” to allow themselves to acknowledge distractions but learn how to “discipline” their (naturally) wandering attention by bringing it back to a specific point of focus and breath;
- 4 that they are engaged in a *long-term process* which they are likely to find at times frustrating and boring in its repetition, and therefore should not expect immediate, earth-shattering, and/or constant “discoveries,” that is, they must be *patient* and work *with and through time*;
- 5 that this work is not for me, their teacher, but for themselves, and therefore they must begin from the first day of class to become their own teachers, that is, to internalize the “discipline” which my outside eye and comments at first call to their attention. Such attention to the focused and concentrated deployment of their (energized) bodies in space through time must become intuitive.

However, if training through repetition of forms is not to become an empty, habitual technique for the long-term practitioner, the actor must commit him/herself fully to training as an ongoing process of self-definition. As Eugenio Barba explains:

Training does not teach how to act, how to be clever, does not prepare one for creation. Training is a process of self-definition, a process of self-discipline which manifests itself indissolubly through physical reactions. It is not the exercise in itself that counts – for example, bending or somersaults – but the individual’s

justification for his [sic] own work, a justification which, although perhaps banal or difficult to explain through words, is physiologically perceptible, evident to the observer. This approach, this personal justification decides the meaning of the training, the surpassing of the particular exercises which, in reality, are stereotyped gymnastic movements.

This inner necessity determines the quality of the energy which allows work without a pause, without noticing tiredness, continuing even when exhausted and at the very moment going forward without surrendering. This is the self-discipline of which I spoke.

(Barba 1972: 47)

This process of *self*-definition and personal justification can never end – the practitioner must constantly (re)discover the “self” in and through the training with *each* repetition.

As with any new experience, the first few sessions are often interesting and intriguing; however, participants can become confused or have doubts about the applicability to acting of their repetitious practice of psychophysiological exercises. As one participant observed, “For the longest time I had difficulty imaging how the discipline work could be directly applied to my acting!” In part I attribute these doubts and confusions to the assumptions some actors bring with them about what acting “is” or “is not,” about the relationship (or lack thereof) between them—“selves,” “acting,” and embodiment, as well as a lack of experience and clarity about how “training” *through the body* relates to “acting.”

Richard Schechner calls our attention to “the whole performance sequence, that is, a seven phase progression stretching from training to workshops, rehearsals, warm-ups, performance, cool-down, and aftermath” (1985: 16).¹² For many young actors, their first experiences in the theatre are with the rehearsal process, that is, one is cast in a specific role for which there are lines to learn, rehearsals to attend, and then performances. Unlike dance, gymnastics, or playing a musical instrument, one is not required to go through any bodily “training” before auditioning and rehearsing. If would-be actors have had “training,” it usually is of the method or Stanislavskian-based kind. Consequently, many young actors have little experience or understanding of the difference between a preparatory form of in-body training and rehearsals, at least as Copeau and more recently Schechner have defined them:

Rehearsal is a way of setting an exact sequence of events. Preparations are a constant state of training so that when a situation arises one will be ready to “do something appropriate.”

(Schechner 1976: 222)

Consequently, intensive body training must first awaken in the participant an awareness of the body which has been missing from his or her experience and understanding of the acting process. Dora Lanier explains why this separation of preparation from rehearsal was important for her: “When I’m in training I can work specifically on each psychophysiological exercise and there is no need to solve specific (acting/dramatic) problems, whereas in rehearsals you have to solve all these problems (of interpretation and choices) to get onstage.” But, as Blau reminds us, in Euro-American theatre one is always “working against

time” (Reinelt and Roach 1992: 443). As much as it can be, training should be a “time out” to “work against time.” This “time” is intended as a space in which the participant begins to discover an alternative relationship *to time through the body*. Since participants enter the training process predisposed to “work against time,” that is, filled with the necessity of getting to a THERE (somewhere), it is at first difficult to encourage them to settle their bodies and minds into not trying to get there, to staying in the “here.”

Some actors are in such a rush. Brooke Nustad explains how she gradually arrived at a realization of the importance of allowing herself the time to focus:

The idea of focusing the “inner eye” on the breath made sense to me, but it wasn’t as easy as I thought. Because I had never spent so much time concentrating on my body before, it took a lot of effort. This was a surprise to me. I guess I thought that these things would “happen” to me just by being in the class. Therein was my next obstacle . . . I started trying to make [things] happen. Instead of . . . concentrating on my breath, I began to think with every move, “How does this make me feel? Am I changing? Is there progress?” . . . At some point . . . I finally gave up the “trying,” and that’s when I actually made some progress. I stopped pushing so hard, and it helped. This made me realize that the same applies to acting. When I keep on task without pushing what I’m doing, I do a better job.

Through practice, the participant optimally begins to develop a new relationship to his or her own bodymind in space as it is “deployed” through time, discovering a state of calm and repose as well as a heightened sense of awareness of the body-in-exercise. Copeau was precise about the type of embodied awareness that training should develop in the actor: “What is needed is that *within them every moment be accompanied by an internal state of awareness peculiar to the movement being done*” (Cole and Chinoy 1970: emphasis added). With each repetition of each exercise, for the *n*th time, there is this “something more” that can be found in one’s relationship to movement. It is repetition *per se* which leads one, eventually, to the possibility of re-cognize-ing oneself through exercise.

Copeau’s vision of training shares several important basic assumptions with training in an Asian martial art. The act of embodiment is present as a mind-aspect (“an internal state of awareness”), and that *progressive development* of such an awareness comes *through the process of corporeal training per se*. These ideas reject the Cartesian body-mind dualism, assuming instead that the body-mind is an integrated whole. As David Edward Shaner explains,

Phenomenologically speaking, one can never experience an independent mind or body . . . “Mind-aspects” and “body-aspects” have been abstracted so frequently that there is a tendency to believe that these terms have exact independent experiential correlates. . . . Although there may be mind-aspects and body-aspects within all lived experience, the presence of either one includes experientially the presence of the other. This relationship may be described as being “polar” rather than “dual” because mind and body require each other as a necessary condition for being what they are. The relationship is symbiotic.

(Shaner 1985: 42–3)

Consequently, Shaner refers to the “presence of both aspects in all experience as ‘bodymind’” (1985: 45). Shaner insists that “in our pre-reflective lived experience

one might suggest that we think with our body and act with our mind and vice versa" (1985: 46).

Actualizing a state in which one "thinks with the body" and "acts with the mind" is precisely what Copeau hoped corporeal training would accomplish, and what training through the martial arts has the potential to accomplish. In Asian disciplines of practice, as in Copeau's *vision*, it is assumed that one accomplishes this state progressively through time. As Yasuo Yuasa asserts, such a view "starts from the experiential assumption that the mind-body modality changes through training of the mind and body by means of cultivation (*shugyo*) or training (*keiko*)" (Yuasa 1987: 18, emphasis added). To practice an Asian meditational, martial, or performance discipline under the guidance of a master traditionally meant that one assumed there would be a progressive alteration and refinement in the body-mind relationship which is different from the normative, "everyday" body-mind relationship. As we have seen, such practice begins with the external body and progresses from the outside "inward" toward realization of an ever more subtle and refined relationship to the bodymind in practice. As Yuasa asserts, regarding Zeami's theory of acting in the *Kadensho*, "art cannot be mastered merely through the conceptual understanding, but must be acquired, as it were, through one's body. In other words, it is a bodily acquisition by means of a long, cumulative, difficult training (*keiko*)" (1987: 104-5).¹³

TOWARD ACTUALIZING AN ALTERNATIVE, PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGICAL PARADIGM OF ACTING THROUGH THE BODY

But what, precisely, is "acquired" or "brought to accomplishment" through long-term bodily based training? First, to be "accomplished" is a *certain type and quality of relationship* between the doer and the done. The accomplished practitioner is one who has achieved and is able to manifest *in practice* a certain (internal and external) relationship to the specific acts: the object of meditation for the practitioner of meditation, the target for the martial practitioner, the tasks within the actor's "score." Although the specific discourses used to explain the qualities and nature of this relationship are culture, genre, and period specific, there is the shared belief that practice is palpable, visceral, physiologically based, and felt. From the practitioner's perspective especially powerful is the link between the breath and the body-in-motion. It is also assumed that the practice is observable and correctable, at least to the outsider/master trained to read the signs of its presence.

Consequently, theorists of acting working from a corporeally based process of training and traditional Asian bodily based systems of martial arts and actor training share remarkably similar descriptions of the psychophysiology of practice, all of which are written from the participant's point of view, that is, from "inside" the experience of one's relationship to the body in practice. Copeau said that the actor must develop an "internal knowledge of the passions he expresses" and an ability "to modulate the intensity of his dramatic expression" (Cole and Chinoy 1970: 219). He expected this ability of internal modulation of expression to be accomplished by practicing

appropriate exercises so that he may learn [the difference between] neutral motionlessness [and] expressive motionlessness . . . He will be made to experiment so that he

can learn how, in various cases, *the internal attitude*, the physiological state . . . will be different.

(Cole and Chinoy 1970: 222)

In a similar vein to Copeau's description of this phenomenon as a palpable "physiological state," theatre visionary Antonin Artaud called for actors to become "crude empiricists" and to examine the "material aspect" of the expressive possibilities of their bodyminds.¹⁴

Expanding on Copeau's general description of "modulating" the "intensity of the passions," Artaud postulated that the actor, through breath control, would be able to place the breath in specific locations in the body in order to cause psychophysiological "vibrations" which would "increase the internal density and volume of his feeling" and "provoke . . . spontaneous reappearance of life" (Cole and Chinoy 1970: 236, 239). Artaud assumed that these emotional states have "organic bases" locatable in the actor's body; therefore, "for every feeling, every mental action, every leap of human emotion there is a corresponding breath which is appropriate to it" (Cole and Chinoy 1970: 236). The actor's task is to develop an "affective musculature which corresponds to the physical localizations of feelings" (Cole and Chinoy 1970: 235), that is, the actor must cultivate the "emotion in his body" (Cole and Chinoy 1970: 239) by training the breath. As the actor becomes able to localize control of the breath, he will be able voluntarily to "apportion it out in states of contraction and release," thereby serving as a "springboard for the emanation of a feeling" (Cole and Chinoy 1970: 238). Once trained, "with the whetted edge of breath the actor carves out his character" (Cole and Chinoy 1970: 237).

Artaud was never able to develop a psychophysiological technique actualizing this vision of the actor as an "athlete of the heart." Among today's actors those who visibly display Artaud's vision of an "affective musculature" controlled by manipulating the breath is the *kathakali* actor-dancer who literally wears his emotional states "in" his body – most obviously in his facial expressions – and who learns such control through the overt manipulation of his breath.¹⁵

As I have explained in detail elsewhere (Zarrilli 1990), in performance of *kathakali*'s nine basic emotional states (*navarasas*), breath control with its attendant circulation of the internal energy is combined with manipulation of particular facial muscles and a dynamic posture of the entire body to bring each state to realization in performance. For example, when performing the erotic sentiment (*rati bhava*) the external manipulation of the facial mask executes the following basic moves, which are closely coordinated with the breathing pattern:

Beginning with a long, slow and sustained in-breath, the eyebrows move slowly up and down. The eyelids are held open half-way on a quick catch breath, and when the object of pleasure or love is seen (a lotus flower, one's lover, etc.), the eyelids quickly open wide on an in-breath, as the corners of the mouth are pulled up and back, responding to the object of pleasure.

Throughout this process the breathing is deep and connected through the *entire* body via the "root of the navel" (*nabhi mula*), that is, it is not shallow chest breathing. The characteristic breath pattern associated with the erotic sentiment is slow, long, sustained in-breaths with which the object of love or pleasure is literally

"taken-in," that is, the sight, form, etc. of the lotus or the beloved is breathed in. The accomplished realization of any of the expressive states occurs when the mature, virtuosic actor's entire psychophysiology is engaged in this dynamic and intricate "internal" process through which particular tensions are created through the manipulation of the breath as it circulates through the entire body.

Like other traditional Asian arts through which an "extra-daily" virtuosic body of practice is actualized, *kathakali*'s understanding of the psychophysiology of performance is based on indigenous concepts of medicine and physiology – in India this understanding is derived from the physiology of Ayurveda as well as from tantric yoga's understanding of the subtle body (Zarrilli 1989a). Therefore, the *kathakali* actor, yoga practitioner, and *kalaripayattu* martial artists all assume that "the *vāyu* (breath/energy/life force) is spread all over the body" and that "it is how to control [the breath] that is [an implicit] part of the training." Through repetition of daily exercises the breath is eventually controlled as students are instructed to breathe only through their nose, and not the mouth – a simple instruction which, when adhered to along with maintenance of correct spinal alignment when performing a variety of exercises, develops breathing which originates at "the root of the navel." Correct instruction also comes from the hands-on manipulation of the student's body by the teacher. As *kathakali* teacher M.P. Sankaran Namboodiri explained, "Without a verbal word of instruction the teacher may, by pointing to or pressing certain parts of the body, make the student understand where the breath/energy should be held or released." When a student assumes *kathakali*'s basic position with the feet planted firmly apart, toes gripping the earth, it creates a dynamic set of internally felt oppositional forces as the energy is pushed down from the navel through the feet/toes into the earth, while it simultaneously pushes up through the spine/torso, thereby supporting and "enlivening" the upper body, face, hands/arms. This centered groundedness is "behind" all aspects of *kathakali* performance including delivery of elaborate hand-gestures (*mudrā*). In performance, actors literally "speak" with their hands/arms through a complete and complex sign-language. Psychophysiologicaly, each gesture originates in the region of the "root of the navel" (*nābhi mūla*) as the breath/energy extends outward through the gesture, optimally giving it full expressivity appropriate to the dramatic moment. Finally, it should be noted that *kathakali* teachers, when teaching some of the basic facial expressions, occasionally instruct students specifically to "push the breath/energy" into a certain part of the face, for example the lower lids, in order to create the psychophysiologicaly dynamic quality necessary to actualize fully an emotional state – in this case, *krodha bhāva*, or the "furious" sentiment.

When compared to *kathakali*'s dynamic mode of displaying the emotions openly in codified facial expressions, supported by a dynamic and fully expressive body, the *nō* theatre seems to epitomize a form in which the actor must literally "stand still." But, behind the surface stillness, the master actor is "not standing still." Commenting on Zeami's treatises on *nō* acting, Mark Nearman clearly explains how Zeami's understanding of the effects of an actor's performance is based on a physiological "vibratory" theory of performance (1982–3). Therefore, implicit in the training of the *nō* actor is the necessity that he be able to modulate his internal energy/breath (*kilch'i*) in order to create the affects used in creating a character. Nearman explains how

the emotions that the portrayed character appears to experience and that are attributed by some spectators to the actor's personal feelings are seen by Zeami to be the product of the trained actor's use of his voice, particularly through the manipulation of the tonal properties of speech. . . . However real these "emotions" or the character may appear to a spectator, they are not truly identical with the personal feelings of the actor. The actor's focus is upon creating these effects. Thus, he cannot permit himself to respond emotionally to his own performance in the same way as the spectator would respond.

(Nearman 1984a: 44)

Nearman goes on to explain that "Zeami's term for this vocally created feeling is *onkan*, tonal [or vibratory] feeling" (1984a: 44), that is, "character . . . arises from the relation of the actor's use of his voice and body to the ambience in which the character appears to exist" (1984a: 46; see also Zeami 1984: 74). Paralleling Nearman's careful exegesis of Zeami's texts, Junko Berberich (1984) has called attention to the palpably dynamic physical *tensions* that the *nō* actor generates when he moves, which create the vibratory affects that Nearman discusses, and which form the basis for the "not standing still" which is behind the actor's surface quietude.

THE PHYSICALIZATION OF THOUGHT: THE OPTIMAL STATE OF THE ACTOR'S AWARENESS

In finding a means to overcome the "separation" between the mind and body, a psychophysiological understanding and practice of acting makes available to the actor an alternative to the too often cognitively based model of the psychological/behavioral creation of the character. Practice of disciplines such as *t'ai chi ch'uan* and *kalaripayattu* allow students to discover the breath-in-the-body and, through acting exercises, to apply this qualitative body-awareness to performance. Working toward mastery of embodied forms, when combined with the ability to fix and focus both the gaze and the mind, frees the practitioner from "consciousness about," allowing the person instead to enter into a state of "concentratedness" focused on the performer's relationship to his or her breath, its circulation through the body, and the deployment of this energy and focus through the body into the performance space. Training in the martial arts, Decroux's Corporeal Mime, and other intensive bodily based disciplines empowers the actor with a means of making *embodied* acting choices, and not simply choices that remain empty "mind-full" intentions.

It is not that reflective consciousness does not have its place in acting. Copeau clearly differentiated between the nature of the actor's cognitive engagement in preparing a role and performing that role, between what Shaner describes as third and second order consciousness (1985). In contrast to first order bodymind awareness which is a "pre-reflective neutral consciousness in which there is no intentionality," second order consciousness is "pre-reflective, assiduous consciousness as exemplified by an athlete during intense competition or a musical artist during performance," while third order consciousness is the "reflective discursive consciousness" (Shaner 1985: 48).

In workshops or rehearsals, one approach to characterization is for the actor to use third order "reflective discursive consciousness" to direct an interpretive choice suitable for each dramatic moment. Another approach, evident for example in Michael Chekhov's (1991) concept of "psychological gesture," is to make use of second order "pre-reflective consciousness" as one explores the possibilities of physicalizing the role. In either case, when the performer performs, what had been the object of preparation "ceases to be an object of study," and the physical/kinesthetic becomes the entry point for the actor into each act/task in his score.

Copeau helpfully defined the relationship between the performer and the performed as a state in which the performer simultaneously "directs [the passions] but . . . is possessed by them" (Cole and Chinoy 1970: 219). Copeau recognizes the optimal state of performance as a *gestalt* in which the performance score, created during the preparatory period through using both third and second order modes of consciousness, in performance becomes an intuitively present structuring of the actor's score which, although it is present to the actor at the periphery of consciousness, may or may not be foregrounded, depending upon how much the actor wants to display these artistic choices as they are enacted. In either case, whether showing or "hiding" this artistry, the structure of action which guides the performance contains in each specific repetition the horizon or limits of the possibilities of its realization within the dramatic and performance context.

The actor trained through a corporeal discipline learns to "direct" the passions as he or she learns to control the breath. Yuasa's research on the body and body-mind relationship eventually led him to describe the practitioner who develops an experiential sensitivity to the internal circulation of ki (breath/energy) as a "ki-sensitive person" whose psycho-physiological awareness he describes as "a *self-grasping sensation of one's body*, that is, as an *awareness of the whole of one's body*" (Nagatomo, 1992b: 60). Yuasa asserts that the ki-sensitive person, through disciplines such as the martial arts, has activated "a mediating system that links the mind and the body" (Nagatomo, 1992b: 59), thereby overcoming Descartes' mind-body dichotomy. For Yuasa the internal flow of ki-energy brings into awareness what he calls the "emotion-instinct circuit." The individual who actualizes an intuitive awareness of ki-energy and is able to channel this energy throughout the body, is able to control and extend it out from the body, whether through vocal or physical action or into images.

How unimaginatively we have conceived of the imagination. Under the influence of Cartesian dualism, the imagination is too often considered to be simply an "image" conceived of as something *in* the mind. From the points of view of Yuasa and phenomenology, *imagining* is a psychophysiological act of the entire bodymind. For the actor to actualize an image, such as visualizing the seagull in Chekhov's play by the same name, means much more than seeing the gull projected onto the screen of one's mind. The actor trained *through the body*, who has begun to actualize "ki-sensitivity," *should* be able intuitively to actualize a full-bodied connection *to* that image which is palpable through the actor's body – from the soles of the feet through the eyes and the top of the head. This is what Barba described as a distillation of "patterns of energy which [is] applied to the way of conceiving or composing a dramatic action" (1985a: 15). This is the "physical aspect to thought" which is the counterpart of "thinking with the body," *both of*

which are essential for the actor if he or she is to be a *complete* artist capable of *creating* thoughts with the body.

Blau, who used *taijiquan* in working with his company, KRAKEN, comments on how actors engaged in this type of psychophysiological work which is intended to “physicalize thought” must take their engagement in that work *beyond* “mere experience.”

Thus, *now*, doing nothing but breathing (and *taking* time, take *time*). You are living your breathing. Stop. Think. You are dying in your breathing. Stop. Think. You are living in your dying, dying in your living. (Take time, breathing.) *Stop. Show.* The doing without showing is mere experience. The showing is critical, what makes it theater. What makes it show (by *nothing* but breathing) is the radiance of inner conviction, the growing consciousness that it *must* be seen, what would make the word come even if there were no breath.

(Blau 1982a: 86)

The actor who is unable openly to *display* his or her art while fully engaged in making it is prone to repeating the fundamental ideological mistake that Artaud made by conflating into some imagined real the palpably present, physiologically based vibratory “feelings” that one experiences while acting and the actor’s own personal emotions. What differentiates Blau’s, Konijn’s (Chapter 6), as well as the Asian actor’s understanding of embodiment is that, as Zeami makes clear, in the moment of performance the actor so fully embodies the tasks of his performance score that he modulates the intensity of his or her breath/energy through the body for the *artistic* purposes of the moment, that is, to create aesthetic effects for an audience, and not to make him/herself “feel good.”

This takes me back to Scott’s observation about the excess energy of American actors and their confusions over the nature of their relationship to them “selves” in creating their art. The “messiness” of the young actors’ problems are locked up as much in their conceptions of acting, as in their inability to unlock their body-minds for creative artistry. However, the possibilities of disciplined training through the body, so easy to articulate here, are only grudgingly actualized by the most patient and dedicated students who refuse to “lose” themselves in the discipline from which they can “find” so much. As Blau put it, the wholly trained actor perches “on the edge of a breath, looking” (1982a: 86).

TOWARD ACTUALIZING A PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGICAL PARADIGM OF ACTING

Being “on the edge of a breath” captures the moments of necessary “suspension” always present in acting as the actor rides the breath/thought/action – that moment where the possibility of failure is palpable. It is that moment of possible failure where the perceiving consciousness (or “action”) bodies forth because it “must.” Performance “on the edge” requires of the actor an unremitting attention to engaging what Blau calls “the necessary” – the consciousness that each task in an actor’s score “must be seen,” i.e., “what would make the word come even if there were no breath” (Blau 1982: 86).

I can think of no dramatic text that more clearly requires that the actor constantly be perched “on the edge of a breath, looking . . .” than Samuel Beckett’s non-verbal score of physical actions, *Act Without Words I*: “flung backwards on

stage from right wing. He falls, gets up immediately, dusts himself, turns aside, reflects." Beckett's directions require the actor to face a precision of embodied form where each action/task must be completed fully and played "in the moment" before the next action is undertaken – though of course one moment will be psychophysiologicaly linked to the next. One must focus on the details, and on connecting those details through one's specific external focus, and through the use of the breath as an animating principle filling out the details of the action internally, through the bodymind. Acting such a detailed and precise physical score, the actor must ride "the edge of the breath" where he must be perched precariously as a perceiving consciousness itself, attentively looking, wondering, experiencing, perceiving, and responding to what is happening in the (theatrical) environment as it is happening. The actor in *Act Without Words I* must remain "innocent" as each action must be discovered and played clearly and fully as it becomes necessary, without a hint of either anticipation of what comes next, or with an overdetermination of "meaning" projected onto an action. Acting Beckett means acting specifically, but without reaching conclusions.

I often use *Act Without Words I* as a useful vehicle for the actor's application of the psychophysiological process described above to problems of acting since it forces actors to return again and again to what is "necessary" in each moment – similar to what must be done in training through the forms of a martial art. The repetition in both the Beckett score, and in form training, ideally leads to an embodied sedimentation – an experience of the inherent musicality and rhythm of the spaces between actions as one plays the nuances between.¹⁶

The demand that the actor "stand still while not standing still" is ubiquitous in many of Beckett's other plays. This tendency toward physical stasis requires acting which is similar to Japanese *nō* theatre or yoga meditation in that one must inhabit a "blank space" where there is apparently "nothing," and yet everything at once. Both require little overt action that is externally visible; however, behind that apparent "inaction" is the blazing "flame" of an active, inner, vibratory perceptivity.

Locked in their urns, the three actors in Beckett's *Play* only engage in slight turns of their heads. In *Not I*, the actress is virtually immobilized except for her moving mouth. In *Eh Joe*, after Joe's initial examination of his room, once the Voice starts "in on him," Joe remains seated on the edge of his bed – his only overt movements a slight lowering of his head and the release of his otherwise unblinking eyelids in the gaps between her speaking. In working on two performances of *Eh Joe* as a live performance in a television studio where the audience experiences the physical presence of the actors as well as their televisual mediation,¹⁷ Joe's stasis, and the increasingly lengthy periods during which the Voice speaks and he remains unblinking and "impassive except in so far as it reflects mounting tension of listening," meant that there was a heightened focus for the audience on what Stanton Garner calls "the visual weight of activity, making gesture and movement dramas in their own right" (1994: 72). Here Joe's "activity" is reduced to listening while not blinking – an extraordinary demand for physical restraint placed on the actor. The "activity lodged in stillness" is Joe's act of listening to the Voice "in his head," and in that act of attempting to "squeeze" the voice away – as Voice says, "That's right, Joe, squeeze away . . ."

How does one approach performing the “interiority” required by Beckett? Noted actress Billie Whitelaw who originated so many of Beckett’s difficult female roles emphasizes the difference between playing “character roles” and acting the Beckett roles she has played with “no color.” Whitelaw explains how she concentrates her attention on timing, rhythm, and the musicality of texts as well as creating an active metaphor for a role (Whitelaw 1995: passim). Following Whitelaw’s approach, I have worked with actresses playing Voice to enter and sustain through the entire twenty-five minute performance the active metaphor of delivering all their lines as a form of “Chinese water torture.” Placing the actress physically “unseen” above Joe and the set, each phrase of the text is delivered “without color” as a drop of water literally dripped/dropped into Joe’s head. For actors playing Joe, we have worked on their constant attempt to psychophysiological “squeeze” the voice “to death with (their) brain.” Forced to remain seated through most of the performance while listening to the Voice and not blinking, the actor must concentrate all his focus and energy on his lower lids to keep them from blinking, much like the *kathakali* actor does when learning to manipulate his lower eyelids when performing “fury.” Indeed, I have used *kathakali*’s exercise of the lower-lids with the actors to develop this process of “squeezing” out the Voice from their lower abdomen. This approach engages the actor in a constant process of psychophysiological engagement in a non-representational activity – a process that is physically and emotionally exhausting to sustain.

In addition to Beckett’s plays, I utilize many other sources in training actors which make similar demands that the actor “stand still while not standing still” – a lengthy process of structured improvisations, the three “station” plays (*Water Station*, *Earth Station*, *Fire Station*) devised/written/directed by Japanese playwright/director Ota Shogo in the 1980s, and newly-devised physical-theatre performances.¹⁸ For Shogo “silence is not a kind of irregular behavior which belongs to special circumstances. Rather it is the reality of our normal state. To exist, therefore, means to be mainly in silence” (Shogo 1990: 152). Shogo’s plays are a series of stage directions requiring an existential silence with movement performed at an achingly slow tempo – slowed every everyday movement. In *The Water Station* there is only the sound of a continuously running broken water faucet and occasional incidental music – encountered in turn by a Girl (Figure 15.3), Two Men, a Woman with a Parasol, etc. Located in a “place out of time,” Shogo explains, “there are words here . . . you must can’t hear them” (ibid). The words you do not hear are the silences that render form from an audience’s imagination.

When the actor’s body is rendered virtually immovable in playing many of these Beckett roles or in achingly slow movement required for Ota Shogo’s *The Water Station*, the requirement that an “inner necessity” of action/task be embodied quickly becomes apparent to the actor. Blau describes the acting required in Beckett’s plays as “realism in extremis. Which is to say that the realistic vision, its methodology, is taken about as far inside as it can go, interiorized so intensely that it seems to occur at the nerve ends . . .” (1994: 53). The actor’s presence is dilated or compressed into an intensity that might “blow the lid off.” It is precisely the requirement for simplicity, dilation and compression that can be so useful to actors in learning how to “stand still while not standing still.”



Fig. 15.3 In Ota Shogo's *The Water Station*, actors must work with the psychophysiological challenge of sustaining slowed down, everyday movement. Training in *taijiquan*, yoga, and *kalarippayattu* allows actors to develop a process capable of actualizing the kind of embodied focus and concentration necessary to hold the audience's attention without words. Andrea Turner as The Girl encounters the broken water faucet in a production at the University of Exeter (2000). (Photograph by John Primrose.)

16

THE GARDZIENICE THEATRE ASSOCIATION OF POLAND

Paul Allain

[*Note:* My research was conducted between 1989 and 1993 and the piece from which this extract is taken was published in 1995. Since then, many things have changed in Gardzienice's practice, profile, and company membership. One important difference to note is that the mill was burnt down, possibly by a local villager. This extract from the original TDR article captures Gardzienice's work at a very specific time in their and in Poland's evolution. The training is one of the elements that has perhaps changed the least, with the same principles and approaches still underlying it.]

In April 1989 I first saw Gardzienice's performances and participated in one of their workshops during their tour of Britain. Searching for inspiration in the flagging British theatre, I was enthralled by the mystique, discipline, and specific language of Polish experimental theatre.

Gardzienice once occupied a marginal position in Polish society, operating in a small village and working in Poland's neglected border area. Today the group is state-financed as it works across the world. Westerners have much to learn about their own creativity from observing and perhaps even participating in their transformations.

Gardzienice's activities mostly take place in the company's buildings in the town of Gardzienice, though their training workshops often accompany their performances worldwide. The company has twice been invited to Stratford-upon-Avon (1991/92) in order to train two small groups of Royal Shakespeare Company actors. I will not deal specifically with these encounters but with the broader scope of Gardzienice's training, which remains one of the strongest and, for me, most influential elements of their contemporary practice.

The daily life of Gardzienice in Poland moves between two worlds. They have resources in the city of Lublin, which include their office, a small bedroom, an archive store, and a rehearsal and meeting space. The office, equipped with simple technology such as a fax machine and a computer, is the hub of activities during the day. In contrast is the base in the village of Gardzienice itself, where most of the creative work happens at night.

At the center of all Gardzienice's operations, both artistic and administrative, is Staniewski. Since 1976, his name has become inseparable from Gardzienice's. His energy continues to astound and his character intrigue, forged as it was in both a communist furnace and in the fiery trail of Grotowski, with whom he collaborated from 1971 to 1976. Staniewski is both disarmingly open and deeply secretive. His struggle for the group's existence has quickened and sharpened his intellect and his battles have made his resolve to fulfil his objectives incontestably watertight. If Staniewski is the pivot of all activities, the next circle of influence and commands is comprised of musical director Tomasz Rodowicz and Mariusz Golaj, who oversees training and workshops. Both have been with the company over 15 years.

In 1976, after leaving Grotowski's paratheatrical work, Staniewski began to make theatre again. He sought a particular environment in which to establish his company and a particular audience which still practiced folk traditions. These could be found in small communities in rural Eastern Poland, as Staniewski has noted:

There is still in Poland a whole unexplored area of culture, a whole tract, which is now dying, day by day. I am thinking of that raw, natural native culture. [. . .] The native culture of Western Europe and of the United States had died at one time in the name of civilization and prosperity. That is the price of progress. [. . .] Tradition is also dying in Poland.

(Staniewski 1989: 13)

The question of how such places and contacts could stimulate theatre was at the core of Gardzienice's research. But since they started this work Polish rural culture has undergone a radical transformation. Just what Staniewski predicted has happened, even in Gardzienice itself, which lies in southeast Poland, some 70 miles from the Ukrainian border and deep in the countryside.

Gardzienice's main building (*oficyna*) has one very large room, a performance/rehearsal space. There are many smaller meeting/work/dormitory rooms. Some of these are relatively undefined and flexible, though others have clear functions, such as the kitchen, the pre-performance public waiting room, and the bedrooms. Throughout are toilets and showers. The most remarkable room is the former kitchen which is decorated with 18th-century hand-painted Delft tiles and houses an ornate fireplace. It is used mostly as an informal meeting place and for music rehearsals. The creation of this space is not only central to performances but has also allowed Gardzienice complete independence in running workshops and meetings.

The company buildings are used often throughout the year. In summer 1993 and whenever they were based in the village, the company gave regular weekend performances of *Carmina Burana* for audiences of 60. In 1993 there were several workshops for young people in the *oficyna*, with work happening both indoors and outside. Flowers from the meadows, paintings, and sculptures decorate the rooms, and in summer the windows and doors are thrown wide open. Singing and music can be heard throughout the day and work may extend until late at night. The atmosphere is warm and creative and there is no sense of division in the work spaces between outdoors and indoors. Morning exercises take place on the meadows or in clearings throughout the forest.

Another landmark in the village is the wooden mill. It was not working from 1962 until 1992, as mill owners traditionally had power and independence and were

therefore disinherited by the Communist authorities. Gardzienice bought the mill in the winter of 1990 and it has been active since February 1992. For Staniewski the plan to get the mill working again has value well beyond practical aid to the village and the reversal of Communist legacies:

A working mill can influence not only the harmony of village life but also should play a principal [*sic*] role as a culturally creative vehicle in itself. [. . .] Culture is not merely a “function of economy.” An effort can be made to prove that culture can inspire economic management. [. . .] Our House of Theatre Practices and its surroundings will be an example of such practical ecology.¹

In such statements one can clearly glimpse Staniewski’s artistic vision. The restored mill is the realization of Gardzienice’s ideals and stands as a testimony to their achievements. But, restorations aside, Gardzienice does not wish for the village to become a dead museum of traditional values and working practices. The Association has no intention of reversing or halting changes, even if these seem to go against their beliefs and undermine their work. With such developments the village has taken on a new lease on life. The *oficyna* has become a hive of activity when the company is in residence, attracting people from all over Poland and the world.

One loss due to these developments is that visitors no longer stay with villagers as was often the case up until 1990. The “native culture,” as Staniewski calls it, has also been affected by this incoming money and international interest, though it is hard to quantify this change. Mariusz Golaj remembers how when he first came to the village in 1979, women would sing on holy days near an outdoor cross. Now they pray at home. Communism fossilized and prescribed rural traditions, but now the people can choose again how to express themselves. One may even occasionally see a satellite dish on the roof of a log cabin in rural Poland. Gardzienice does not propose that traditional culture be elevated above newer popular forms, but the Association hopes to show that the two can exist side by side.

TRAINING

Gardzienice’s performance style is rooted in a specific training method. From their beginning, they found a creative base through extensive use of vocal and physical exercises which have remained consistently exploratory. The training is loosely based on theories of carnival, particularly on Bakhtin’s interpretation as detailed in *Rabelais and His World* (1968), a book that strongly influenced Gardzienice’s early work.

Gardzienice’s training has several dimensions, including the fabrication of images, the exploration of texts, and the building of a repertory of acrobatic and physical movements, to name just three examples. It may be stimulated by the collection of material from rural contacts (for example: gestures, songs, texts, stories, superstitions) which are incorporated into it; it continually expands the company’s store of folksongs and music with which to respond to people in Gatherings and Expeditions and it expresses a specific aesthetic as well as a way of working and living. As a result of the training, performers are capable of implementing Staniewski’s vision and fulfilling the musical and physical requirements of Gardzienice’s performances. Performers develop the ability to be both spontaneous

and creative, yet also submissive to Staniewski's direction. Gardzienice's training has attracted international interest from such groups as the Royal Shakespeare Company.

The Voice

Gardzienice's vocal training has three basic elements: an inseparable connection to physical movement and breath; a nontechnical approach (it does not refer specifically to physiological phenomena); and the use of folksongs from many cultures. All physical action is built from a musical base. In a workshop, Gardzienice members usually teach participants several songs, most of which are from their performances. These evolve via brief improvisations, which are described as "ornamentations." During the Latin song "Ecce Torpet Probitas" from the *Codex Burana* song cycle, the main ornamentation happens in performance on the last word – *recedunt*. This evolved in training as individuals were encouraged to briefly allow their voices to float and meander melodically above the drone that the others were holding. This became a fixed element in the song and was incorporated into the performance, yet it also remains as an exercise. In other such exercises participants copy Gardzienice actors' lead. For example, learners must hold a dissonant chord within a song or follow a declining scale on the word "gloria" in relation to a partner's simultaneous slide. Such exercises are not subordinated to the actual task of singing the song in its entirety. A careful balance between the whole and detail is always maintained. After the brief ornamentation, the songs are sung in full, until the next person is asked to improvise around another word.

These exercises encourage purity and accuracy of note, close listening, and a sense of harmony. However, Gardzienice does not treat this practice technically, discussing resonators or the organs involved in vocal production, as many teachers would. Gardzienice prioritizes group singing rather than individuals' specific problems. For Gardzienice, song warms up the voice, but it is as important for what Gardzienice calls "mutuality" – a close, physical relationship. Staniewski says that, "Song Singing not only warms up the voice, but creates a harmony in the group, a common vibration" (1989: 18). Only after such a mutuality is achieved are the finer performative effects of the music considered. Staniewski is not overly concerned with the specific physical details of voice work, but is looking for more profound achievements. His contact with village singers has allowed him to think in a simple yet refreshingly broad manner about the possibilities of song in theatre and in actor training.

Connecting the voice to action is part of Gardzienice's continual search. In the 1991 workshop with the RSC actors in Stratford, participants ran up a wall and backflipped down with assistance from the others. On landing there was an explosion of song from those assisting. The choir had to "sing the action and performers" as Staniewski describes it; they watched the movement closely, became motivated, and vocally led it. A connection between sound and action is of prime importance, be it within one body or in a larger network of people. The empathy between voice and body depends on breath, for song rides on the breath and breath enables movement. One of Gardzienice's ways of walking is defined by a regular rhythm of inhalation and expiration, which leads the body and its steps. Breathing provides a base as the simplest of all activities and is thus the performer's key,

allowing exertion or tranquility. Sounds that are encouraged are not completely arbitrary but are controlled by Golaj's precisely set physical and rhythmical limitations, Rodowicz's more intuitive judgements, and Staniewski's energy and clarity of thought. "Musicality" – as Gardzienice calls a sense of musical and rhythmical harmony and understanding – is vital, be it in movement or the voice, but it cannot be forced out of people. Gardzienice's activity is restless and nervous but is based on a group identity, security in numbers, and the power of the choral voice. It is driven by a search for the simplest instinct to sing together.

Technical flexibility is encouraged by the songs Gardzienice chooses to work with. The songs are in many different languages and some are without words; each sets its own demands and has its own needs. For example, the three-part "Ave formosissima" is sung on quiet, long-sustained notes, which are difficult harmonies; the song has its own "training." The mouth must cope with Yiddish, Greek, Latin, and Polish languages. The body needs to listen and respond to the rhythmical dynamics of the corresponding cultures. In their vocal training, Gardzienice's actors traverse the world.

Company members use a broad range of acoustic instruments from many countries in the training work. Most of the group are proficient in one or two instruments. Musical accompaniment to training can also be the specific responsibility of collaborators, as it was when the members of Kwartet Jorgi, a Polish avantgarde folk group provided incidental music for the autumn 1992 workshop in Derry, Northern Ireland, as part of the International Workshop Festival. Music dynamizes the physical action but it is also central to the creation of atmosphere. Musicians play during meals, at workshops, or during massages after strenuous exercise. This is a strong constant in the work and provides a base for all activities. From this base the training can develop, action can evolve, and eventually a performance can be created.

The Body

A central and unique element of Gardzienice's training is night-running. Evening work usually begins with this activity, which might last anywhere from half an hour to an hour, though rehearsals do not always adhere to this rule and in winter there is less running. Night-running for Staniewski has a particularly important place in the training. During workshops in 1992 he described it as "the first word," "a basic state of human nature," and "initiatory purification before work." Its conception possibly comes from Staniewski following the path of Artaud to the remote Sierra Madre Occidental region of Mexico and the Peyote-imbibing Tarahumara people. For Artaud the journey had, above all, immense spiritual significance; for Staniewski too, though he took from it something quite practical. Like Artaud, Staniewski was struck by the magical beauty of the deep canyons, and like many before and after them, by the energy and physical prowess of the Indians. Artaud was looking for "organic culture, a culture based on the mind in relationship to the organs" (in Knapp 1971: 151) – a culture away from the rest of civilization, among a people in close touch with their environment and bodies. This was epitomized by the running of the Tarahumara. The Tarahumara are renowned for running long distances, often 200 miles, over two or three days in the rocky, difficult terrain. They run both for practical reasons – carrying messages, hunting – and for more

ritualistic ones, as demonstrated in races or *rarajipari*. Running is a well established tradition for the ethnic group and begins in early childhood. They do not run fast but show astonishing endurance, never out of breath after long runs. “Probably not since the days of the ancient Spartans has a people achieved such a high state of physical conditioning” (Lutz and Lutz 1989: 21). One can see the obvious attraction in this for Staniewski: the Tarahumaran’s corporeal and psychological abilities, the sympathy between the Tarahumara and their natural surroundings physicalized in activity, and the combined practical and spiritual functions of running as a tradition. All these elements were adopted and adapted for Gardzienice’s own night-running.

For Golaj, “night-running has its own poetics, its techniques, which can be practiced, its space which can be fulfilled differently each time.” It liberates him, making him aware of others, “naturalizing” him both by heightening his consciousness of nature – “the pulse of the earth and shooting stars” – and that of natural human gestures and behavior – “breathing, the next exercise, mutuality, the group. Without any psychological consequences” (Golaj 1991: 55). In the darkness, the eyes lose their dominance and other senses control the activity. The body is warmed, muscles loosened, and the mind prepared, almost cleansed of distracting thoughts. This is done in relation to a specific environment: in Gardzienice along the paths and sandy forest tracks, or in Wales in 1989 along cliff-top roads.

It is of value to explain the quality and purpose of night-running in detail, for within it are contained most of the elements of Gardzienice’s training. It is also the first point of contact most people have with the training. Within the slow rhythmical, breath-driven stepping of the tight-knit crowd, there can be pauses for other exercises, not always proposed only by the leader. They might include acrobatic exercises such as cartwheels and backflips on the grass, or trust games (as they might be called) like falling from a high bank into waiting arms. As the group advances, the movement is never regular – the breathing may develop in a moment’s brief improvisation and this structure may be echoed physically. Two people might break away to run downhill at a faster pace before returning to the shuffling crowd. A partner perhaps supports the other’s head, so they can gaze into the star-studded sky while moving. Words are not used, but occasionally part of a song might grow from the breathing. There are no verbal explanations and no observers; the only participation possible is active. In spite of the pressure this creates, a safe environment is always ensured. The pace is slow (it is not a jogging rhythm), so one feels able to run all night. On returning to the rehearsal room, however, one is aware of the energy and effort committed. Moreover, one feels the heightened consciousness brought on by the activity and the deep breathing in the dark night air. The run usually ends with a vigorous massage to further shake out and ease tensions in the body.

Some of the theories underlying the training arose from literary sources but these were soon subsumed by the practice. Physical elements were taken directly from Bakhtin, although not literally replicated. His descriptions of the “grotesque” body – “the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the pot-belly, the nose” (1968: 26) – and the laughter that undermines authority were concrete enough for the company to physically interpret them. Staniewski has worked closely with the actress Anna Zubrzycka to develop the art of the belly laugh. Staniewski turned laughter into a musical, rhythmical aesthetic form that demands

strict diaphragm control and physical looseness to allow the body and the organs of the voice to release the sound. Bakhtin's influence has led Gardzienice away from a psychological, character-based approach to acting, toward an emphasis on physical exertion and excess, finding artistic value in "grotesque" shapes and reinterpretation of the body. All movements are led by the spine or the pelvis. Gardzienice actors consider the pelvis as the center for movement and the source of energy and are disinterested in the fussy, smaller expressivity of the hands and face.

Another theoretical notion that shaped the group's training is that of "high and low culture," as Staniewski describes it. The tension between these two levels is central to Gardzienice's practice and is inherent in their actual contact with villagers, in the collision of two worlds of experience. With regards to *Avvakum*, their fourth performance, Staniewski has written, "Although we've constructed a theatrical event of Boschlike images, these could be replaced by pictures of the everyday work of the villagers. But to show the villagers at work would not be theatrical" (1989: 17). Staniewski has described the villages as Gardzienice's "university," but one where observations made and knowledge gained are considered physically and not just intellectually.

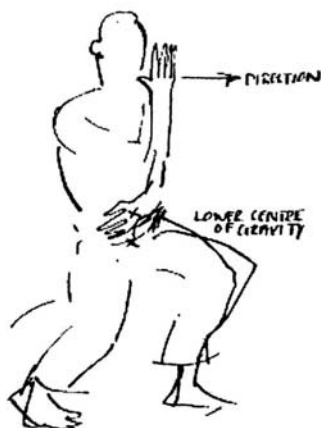
In Gardzienice's training and, as a natural consequence of this, in their performances, there is a corporeal relationship between earth and heaven. Their exercises include movements which root the body to the ground: low centers of gravity, wide-legged stances, stamping that pushes the feet into the floor. Alternately, there are those that look toward the sky – explosive leaps in the air with the chest and stomach bared to the heavens, and upward stretches. One exercise that bridges the two realms is to reach up on tip-toes with an inhaling breath, then expire and collapse flat on the ground. From one perspective this can be viewed as a simple stretch-and-release exercise, yet for Gardzienice it specifically relates to the dual worlds of heaven and earth. This dialectic is perceptible in many exercises, gestures, and postures in their work and gives it a particular contradictory flavor and dynamic energy.

These conflicting poles and the transition from one to the other are reflected practically in a notion that is central to Gardzienice's training: the division of action into moments of "strength and nonstrength," as Staniewski describes it. Strength means that the body is rooted to the earth; it is charged with energy; it can provide a base for a partner to work with; it is simple, direct, and firm. Nonstrength is soft and delicate without excess energy; it can be easily lifted or manipulated; it can fly and fall or climb on another person; it is relaxed and open. An exercise that contains both elements is the rise-and-fall exercise cited in the previous paragraph.

The relation of actions to emotion is rarely touched upon by Gardzienice. It is the actor's job to "do" rather than interpret, which is left to Staniewski and ultimately, during performances, the audience. The emphasis is continually on movement without a psychological foundation. In performance, the characters Gardzienice creates are allegorical, archetypal, or choral. Simple human actions and relationships are of the essence. Cultural patterns of activity are examined and explored: the bowing of Russian Orthodox worship, which suggests humility, was used in the creation of *Avvakum*. But beyond simplistic connections between cultures and their physicality, emotions and psychology are not explored by Gardzienice.

Golaj has noticed that, “Gardzienice’s training – ‘moving’ (*poruszanie*) as we call it – was never just for the sake of a theatrical effect, or for the creation of champion superstars. It was, it is, for practicing mutuality” (1991: 55). In their workshops, Gardzienice continually demands physical support and care among the participants. This can liberate people from everyday social patterns and restrictions as they become part of a mass organism with its own rules and rhythms. The value for the participant stems from this looser relationship between conscious thought and movement. This movement can then be given theatrical form and an aesthetic context.

There are three basic training exercises that are described by Staniewski as “mutuality exercises.” They involve a pair closely engaged in taking each other’s

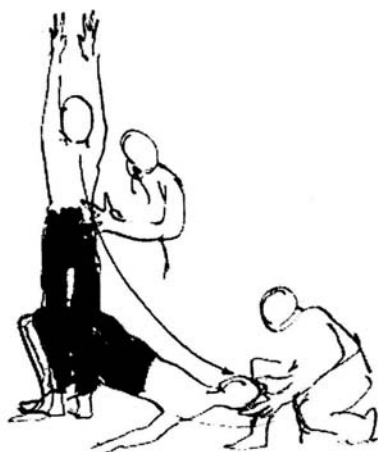


(a)

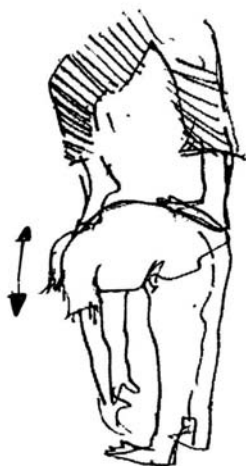


(b)

Fig. 16.1 Ways of walking: (a) Walking with a low centre of gravity and with a gliding linear movement. (b) Walking in the space with movement leading from the pelvis. (Drawing by Rae Smith.)



(a)



(b)



(c)

Fig. 16.2 Strength and non-strength: (a) One stretches up and is then supported as they release to fall to the floor. (b) & (c) One stands on the base of the other's spine, a position of strength. The upper torso must remain relaxed and is tested by the partner's prodding foot. (Drawing by Rae Smith.)

weight: first, by one laying the other down across the knees; second, letting the partner lean backwards to lie on the floor while supporting the head; and third, letting the partner lean backwards, facing and supporting the partner hand-to-hand. All three demand that the partner being manipulated have a relaxed upper body and strong legs (the Bakhtinian division), but most of all they demand a transference of attention from the head to the pelvis. This area must lead the movements, with the head relaxed and inactive. Many find this adjustment very



Fig. 16.3 The three mutuality exercises. (Drawing by Rae Smith.)

difficult and the top half of the body is stiff with the head tensed, ready to initiate the moves. The ability to control and release is important for attaining a sense of mutuality, trust, and agreement – a state in which the timing should be coordinated, the breathing together, and the position balanced. Exploration can only stem from this base of mutuality.

Gardzienice's training is remarkable because it changes in relation to their performances. Staniewski has said how each creation has its own training. Hasidic spinning is peculiar to *Sorcery*, their second performance, and birdlike walking and

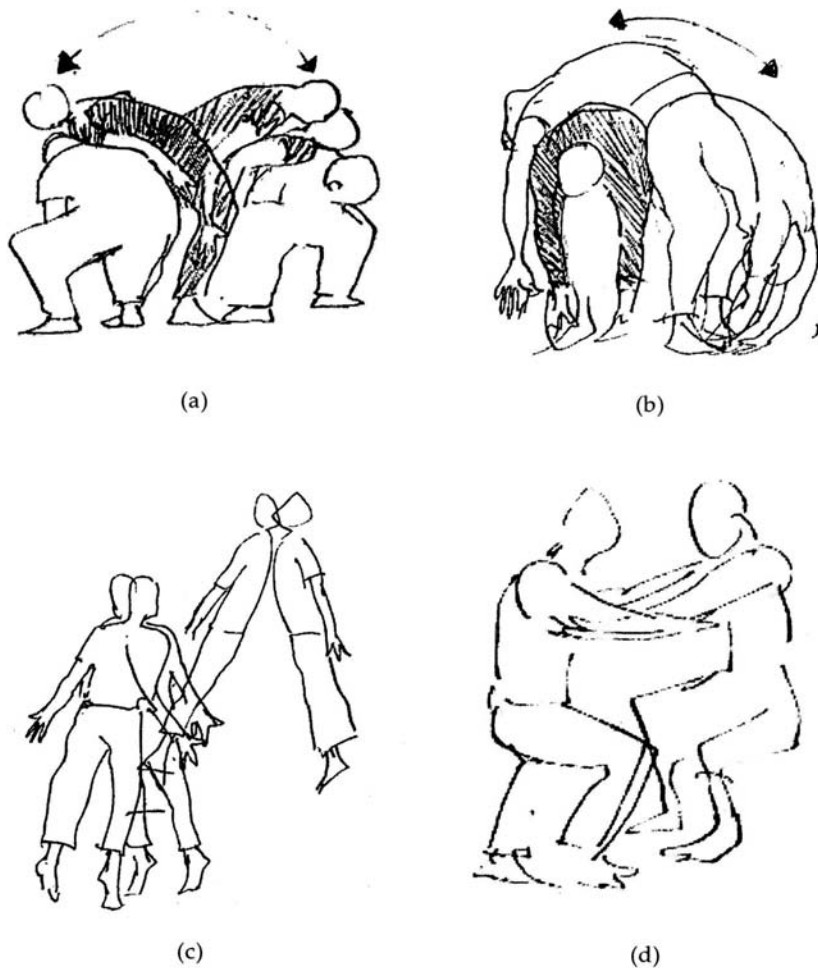


Fig. 16.4 Warm-up exercises: (a) One person leans forward and back giving their weight to two others. (b) One partner takes the other's weight across their back. (c) & (d) Two people run towards each other, jump and bound off each other's chests to land and hold each other in a crouch. (Drawing by Rae Smith.)

mutuality exercises relate to *Carmina Burana*. Gardzienice's workshops take participants through a condensed version of the process that Association members go through in creating their performances. They offer participants a combination of experience and objective education, of activity and observation. When Gardzienice demonstrates exercises, workshop participants are encouraged to find an active role in supporting the presentation, which might be repeated several times. They ostensibly become a chorus, responding to the protagonists. By following the performers' paths and stepping so fully inside the creative process, participants can learn a great deal about Gardzienice's work, without theoretical explanation or analysis. Reciprocally, Gardzienice actors develop ideas and find new material that may later be included in performance. For Gardzienice, training is an integral,

creative part of their working process and is not viewed in isolation from their other activities.

The unspoken dialog between workshop participants and leaders is greatly enhanced by the size of the Polish ensemble. In the 1991 Stratford-upon-Avon workshop there were 7 trainers for 13 actors, an excellent and rare teaching ratio. In Wales in 1989, there were 9 for some 20. With such a large group of leaders, participants are overwhelmed by Gardzienice's group culture; attitudes and techniques are passed on subconsciously and through imitation, not analytically or academically, but almost magically.

There is little distinction in both structure and content between training for outsiders and the internal company training. The former is a microcosm of the latter. The main differences are the more personal intensity in Staniewski's training of his actors and the lack of separation between training and rehearsal. The process of devising a performance is therefore closely linked to the notion of letting the performers acquire new abilities and continually demanding more of them, so that they expand their range through a cumulative process. By looking for the "*trud*" or obstacle in an exercise and overcoming it, one will improve. Before all activities, including training, there are meetings for precise preparation, not necessarily involving the whole company. Afterwards there are rigorous note sessions led by Staniewski, who is always meticulously detailed.

There is little room for laziness, tiredness, or complaint in the process. If Staniewski wishes to work briefly and individually with one performer, the others will be sent out, even into cold night air. However undermining Staniewski's criticisms may initially seem, they are part of a deep search which relates directly to the actor in performance. Staniewski is provocative, forcing the performer to cut through psychological and physical resistance. He is not interested in clichés, but rather gestures, actions, and movements which perhaps surface from depths that may even surprise the performer. Staniewski expects his actors to open up the range of possibilities, to be receptive to his suggestions and those of other performers, and to have stamina. The process must become instinctive so that they can achieve a level of ease which Staniewski often explains with the Gnostic poem: "I sing and I am sung: I dance and I am danced." They must work closely with each other, listening and sharing, yet be forceful enough to make propositions and individually develop them. These creative suggestions are always put into practice and eventually comprise the performance, though at any stage they can be rejected by Staniewski.

As one might expect, the long period of creativity seems to be a collaborative process. A typical rehearsal might involve the actors meeting in the evening to be joined later by Staniewski. By the time he arrives they may have a solution to a problem from the night before, may have learned a new song, or may have a proposition developed. But it is not fully a collaboration; Staniewski ultimately controls all elements, particularly in the later stages of rehearsal when his direction becomes more dominant.

Much nurturing and development goes on behind closed doors and is part of a unique relationship between Staniewski and each individual performer. Because it is private, a total perspective on the process can scarcely be achieved. Staniewski questions, observes, pushes, energizes, regulates, and is always vigilant; what he asks cannot be impossible for he achieves it himself.

Rooted in the group's history, the original theoretical inspiration, and the personal stories of the company members, Gardzienice's training has many remarkable features which deserve wider recognition. It is known by very few people, though the group's work with the RSC has attracted public and media attention in Britain. Gardzienice's workshops are for small numbers of participants and little has been written about them, as observers are rarely allowed access. This is beginning to change. Polish students are now collaborating with Gardzienice on documenting their work. This has ranged from accounts of several students' journey by boat to Gotland in the Baltic Sea to join Gardzienice there, to descriptions of workshops. Though not yet published, this reflects an opening up in Gardzienice's attitudes.

Carmina Burana

The creation of Gardzienice's fifth performance, *Carmina Burana*, is inevitably a response to the new Poland. *Carmina Burana* emerged slowly in various forms and premiered in November 1990. During Gardzienice's 1989 tour of Britain, *Carmina Burana* was previewed by Staniewski in the tour program notes as work-in-progress: "[I]ts theme is an allegorical image of a human being in an age of transition. It is a vision of a man suspended between two cultures (pagan and Christian)" (Centre for Performance Research 1989: 16). The music was first performed in a rural chapel in Italy in July 1990. Even after its theatrical premiere four months later, it continued to change radically up until roughly the end of 1992, when its form became relatively stable.

Carmina Burana is based on the 13th-century song cycle of the *Codex Burana*, or songs from Beuren (a region in Germany). The songs are strung episodically on the broken narrative of Tristan and Isolde. It contains a mixture of secular and religious songs from several countries, in both Latin, then the language of officialdom and the church, and German, the native language of the people of Bavaria. The *Codex Burana* moves through a vast range of emotions and styles, from erotic and chaste love homages to bawdy drinking songs. *Carmina Burana* has a similar scope, showing the power of conflicting aspirations, the contradictory nature of the world, and the fragility of human existence. Isolde the Younger exists alongside Isolde the Elder. The human condition is exemplified nowhere more clearly than in the *Codex* song "O Fortuna" about fickle Fortune, personified on her perpetually revolving wheel. Gardzienice uses a range of songs from the *Codex*, from "O Fortuna" to the cynical "Ecce Torpet Probitas": "Look around you – integrity is in a coma / Virtue dead and buried." This music is best known today through composer Carl Orff's extremely popular 1937 interpretation.

Tristan and Isolde is used by Gardzienice not as a triangular narrative, but to show the fickle nature of love through allegorical events. The episodic structure reflects the stories, particularly Beroul's 12th-century version which is comprised of short scenes and incidents. The story provides a loose framework of episodes which include Tristan's madness, his wooing of Isolde on the boat, and the anger of King Mark. In the performance it is not easy to discern such moments. To avoid confusion the characters introduce themselves: Tristan, the older and younger Isoldes, King Mark, Merlin and his wife Vivien (these two are not part

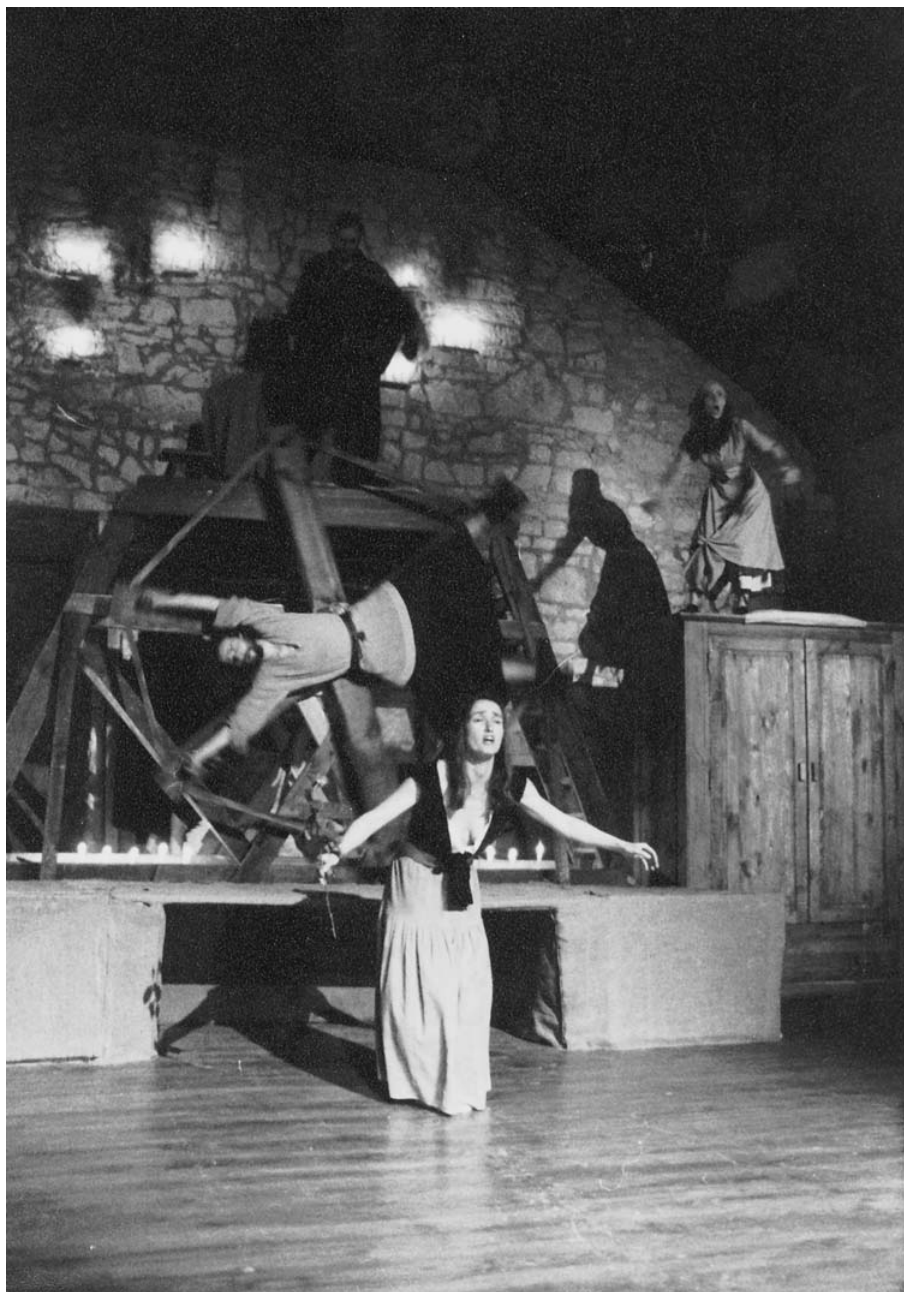


Fig. 16.5 Dorota Porowska in *Carmina Burana*. Directed by Włodzimierz Staniewski. (Photograph by Kazysztof Furmanek.)

of the original story and are developed from the Arthurian legends). Some parts of the written stories are intact, usually delivered as dialog, as in a scene depicting Tristan's feigned madness. Some images are directly transposed, like the black sail of the boat on which Tristan and Isolde spin round at the climax of the performance. Generally though, the original narrative is split up into isolated moments and action sequences, reflecting the contrasting and eternally interwoven themes of love and war.

Within and between sections of the story, other texts are used. These range from Solomon's "Song of Songs" in the Bible – "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love . . . Thou hast ravished my heart" – to the section in *Macbeth* (I, 7) concerning Duncan's murder – "If it were done when 'tis done, then t'were well / It were done quickly." The songs' lyrics are also part of the audible text: the Pilgrim Fathers' song – "He dies, the friend of sinners dies / Lo, Salam's daughters weep around" – accompanies a section called "The Domestic War." This is presented as a "battle of the sexes" and is figuratively and physically suggested.

Accompanied by action, both sung and spoken texts do not expound the narrative or the characters' behavior, but contribute to the layers of meaning through careful structuring. In and of themselves the texts rarely have a literal meaning. Songs are not sung through from start to finish and they evolve from the form in which they are first learned. In spite of the ensuing complexity and richness, the characters' progression, and from this a sense of the narrative, is clearer and more accessible in *Carmina Burana* than in Gardzienice's three previous performances.

The roles of Merlin and Vivien cast objective light on the intimate relationship between Tristan and Isolde. Besides their physical and vocal interactions with the others, they take on choral rather than character-specific roles, developing archetypical portrayals of male/female relationships. They enact the aforementioned scene from *Macbeth* with the coarseness of a Punch and Judy puppet show, Golaj manipulating Catherine Corrigan, a British actress, as his puppet wife and giving her voice Judy's shrillness. The choir leader accompanies this with fairground organ music. Such moments allude in a popular performance style to the stereotypical battle of the sexes. Merlin and Vivien are down-to-earth characters in contrast to the elevated poetic romanticism of Tristan and Isolde. If one is aware of the mythological and literary interpretations of Merlin and Vivien, the *Macbeth* sequence is undercut by the knowledge that she entranced him with love. His domination over her becomes an ironic role reversal. If one is not aware of such literary complexities, these two characters seem to be simple representations, commenting on events and adding to the choral action.

Merlin is archetypical for he is also provocateur and trickster and the animator of the performance. Golaj had a more objective role than the other performers in the creation of the piece, overseeing the physical sequences. This is evident in his stage presence. At the start of the performance, he opens the main doors and leads on a real horse. He later lights the candles, opens the wardrobe doors, and moves the piece on with interruptions and shouted commands. In his black magician's cape, he scuttles like a spider around the stage with his wife. His ego is revealed in his quickly intoned monolog where his emphasis is always on the personal pronoun. He spews forth his litany of self-inflation:

Ja byłem we wielu kształtach zanim mnie uwolniono [. . .]

Ja byłem z moim Panem w niebiesiech, ja nosilem sztandar.

I appeared in many shapes before I was freed [. . .]

I was with my God in the heavens, I was the flag bearer.

His selfish Demigod is a blunt intrusion of the ego, disharmonious in contrast to the musicality of the choir. Staniewski and Golaj were inspired by Jung's writing on the trickster myth. They created an allegorical figure that represents what Jung described as a shadow in civilized society: the superstitious, mischievous, and animalistic side of human behavior. Merlin recalls these suppressed instincts in us all. By opening the doors to the theatre space Golaj/Merlin is drawing us into the trickster's world.

When the piece is performed in Gardzienice village, audience members are ushered in by Staniewski and his helpers and are individually shown to a place in the left or right set of old church pews, facing the main stage area. There is a central passageway between these four rows of seats, running toward the back of the theatre (Staniewski had proudly called it his "church"). Level with the last row of pews is a harmonium on a raised rostrum – the place for the choir and their leader. At the main "altar" end of the large hall is a platform of rostra by which stand two large wardrobes, one on each side, and a giant wheel of fortune that can be spun round by a water mill-wheel mechanism. Under these rostra is stored a huge half-barrel with a removable lid, which can be wheeled out into the central stage area, between the platform and the audience. There are ladders leading up from the rostra to the tops of the cupboards and King Mark's stool is at the pinnacle of the set, a precarious ledge above the wheel. Stage left, in one wall of the building, between the cupboard and the first row of pews, are two large doors which open out onto the meadows. The whole is lit by two small electric lanterns and candles dotted around the set and the building. There is a bright, soft glow over all.

The scenography provides flexibility of levels and staging that enables action to be closely integrated within it. At one point Tristan is strapped to the wheel and spun round with frightening velocity as fools would have been on the 16th-century Nuremberg carnival wheel as part of a depiction of hell. Isolde the Elder falls backwards off a cupboard and is suspended from the top of it by her feet. A variety of levels are used, with King Mark looking down on the action from his palace perch. The floor is spacious enough for acrobatic and physical sequences such as the "war." As the doors of the two wardrobes seem to magically open and close, tableaux inside them are revealed and then disappear. The half-barrel becomes a boat, a grave, and a movable ministage. The scenography is often surprising, but perhaps the most impressive and simple aspect of the design is the potential offered by the building itself, with doors that lead directly outside.

At the beginning of the performance the doors are thrown open for Merlin to lead in a cart horse, a gesture of empathy with nature and a stunning theatrical moment. Later the audience is signalled to leave by these doors and spectators must walk across the grass into the black night. These doors "naturalize" the act of attending a performance by acknowledging the rural surroundings. The presence of the horse sets a magical tone yet is also a theatricalization of one small part of nature. The dimension this entrance adds to the performance is difficult to describe, sensory and suggestive as it is. The effect is of course lost when the performance

tours, though another horse was used by the company for the 1992 European Culture Festival in Krakow.

If they are not strained, as sometimes happens, the actors' performances can be dynamic and beautifully lyrical as they dexterously weave their way through demanding physical and vocal sequences. Intense concentration is needed to follow the non-narrative sequence and find a secure path through the often illogical selection of texts. There are sudden shifts in both musical levels of pitch and tone, and in energy quality; stamina and extreme physical awareness are required. A complex Georgian song is accompanied by Tristan "dancing" with his two Isolde, first one, then both, and then just the second. Their balance is perfect, the difficult rhythm is controlled, and great strength, trust, and understanding are revealed. Technically precise as well as aesthetically thrilling, they accurately denote the ache and ardour of intense love. The actors work together with split-second timing, rhythmically and melodically in tune with the choir, or a monolog, or a spoken or sung duet. There are many layers in each moment of the performance, the distillation of years of rehearsal and training, and the actors' attention and energy can never flag. If they do, Staniewski, located near the choir, will either urge on the action or inject a shout of admonishment.

Carmina Burana has a playful mood. There is physical space between the audience and the actors and between the actors themselves, there is variety in the musical pace and tone, and the subject matter is handled gently, reflecting the fickle nature of love rather than its agonies. There are even one or two moments of humor, as when Mark and Tristan debate their right to Isolde's body as two quack doctors, using a Latin song, "Ego Sum Abbas."

Carmina Burana's music is eclectic, coming from the *Codex Burana*, but also from many places, including Britain, Poland, Scandinavia, Georgia, and Greece. The final song "Eksomologeisthe to kyrio" is from the religious enclaves of Mount Athos, which Staniewski has visited. The music seems randomly selected according to the director's likes, but has no unifying force. Textual choices also reflect this diversity, with portions taken from different retellings of the central myth and from several other secular and religious sources. The musical heterogeneity points to Gardzienice's wide travelings and the large number of foreigners who have visited or worked with them during the creation of *Carmina Burana*. It represents a shift from village to city, from village dialog to Shakespeare, and from cultural specificity to multicultural diversity.

In an article on *Carmina Burana*, Polish critic Marek Zagancyk highlights the contemporary relevance of the production, with reference to the transitional age when the *Carmina Burana* songs were compiled – "the autumn of the Middle Ages" (1991: 7). He relates this to Poland's present passage from an absolutist ideology to a free-market system and the feeling of suspension that many now feel. For me the performance is apolitical, and has few specific contemporary implications. It is not historical, as Staniewski has partly revealed by saying light-heartedly but with underlying truth: "the production is about love, in other words about nothing" (in Zagancyk 1991: 7). In this timeless, abstract piece, Gardzienice has moved from the specific and political to the universal and broadly mythological, from the more objective to the personal.

Both Zagancyk and another Polish critic, Janusz Majcherek, analyze this development in articles whose titles in translation approximately mean "Between

East and West". Majcherek seems to want to relocate Polish theatre by asserting its and Gardzienice's position in the midst of Western culture. Such approaches undermine the group's firmly established identity. The naming of new values and frameworks by critics may relegate to history characteristics of Gardzienice's work formerly deemed virtuous, qualities and conditions, such as their isolation, that have made the work uniquely their own.

Carmina Burana has been very well received by most critics and the public, especially in Poland at the Warsaw Theatre Meetings in January 1992. Many are tired of the now clichéd images of oppression and exile, theatricalized religious symbolism and, to put it crudely, the sight of black boots stomping in the darkness. Many hail Gardzienice's attempt to find new languages and idioms as central to the development of Polish theatre. In *Gazeta Wyborcza*, a national daily newspaper, Majcherek hailed Gardzienice as the most successful theatre company in Poland, and in *Teatr* magazine, *Carmina Burana* was named the best performance of 1991. Critics and audiences can now see the performance in their Polish cities. The underground can now be feted above ground. In viewing this performance, Polish audiences perhaps feel closer to Western culture, or at the very least, feel a satisfying distance from their past. Yet as both a Westerner and as one of those who is too young to have directly witnessed the heyday of Polish theatre, I must confess some nostalgia for what I have read so much about but have never actually known.

In building their cultural center and performing their repertory in the village itself, Gardzienice is opening its home to others on a scale never previously possible. The traveling company that has been to many parts of the world in search of a "new natural environment" is now settling more permanently into its own natural environment. Staniewski has outlined his intentions in this most recent manifesto:

Culture is born from the image that we all have in our hearts of our "inch of land." As artists we are wandering through the world and searching for this "inch of land" into which we can inscribe our presence. "Ecos" in Greek means "home" while creativity I understand as a dialogue with the spirit (*genius loci*). Therefore it is necessary to talk about the ecology of art. With *genius loci* one can talk through music and the language of the voice. How is it possible to restore the musicality and thereby spiritual quality to all forms of theatre work?

(Staniewski 1992: 52)

Such an exposition does not lend itself to debate. Staniewski's manifestos are not presented as provocations to be challenged, but rather as ideas to be confirmed or simply reformulated.

In recent statements, Staniewski seems to be trying to redefine the ideological position of Gardzienice as an artistic center in a deeply transformed Poland and a post-Cold War Europe. In 1990 Staniewski wrote:

During the next three years we shall start on a series of performances and Gatherings created in this "*Spatium*" (i.e. the village). [. . .] This recalls the tours which our company undertook some years ago in the great open spaces of Eastern Poland, Lapland, or the Apennines, but now resumed and condensed into a single place.

(Staniewski 1992: 56)

Gardzienice village is imagined as a meeting place where Eastern and Western influences converge.

Gardzienice lies on the fringes of where Cultural Europe meets Cultural Asia. Here, more than anywhere else, it is possible to conduct activities which return the East back to European Culture. [. . .] The borders of the East must open up for the infiltration of spiritual as well as material culture. In these new times, Gardzienice can be a post where a particular kind of alchemy of culture may occur.

(Staniewski 1992: 52)

EFFECTOR PATTERNS OF BASIC EMOTIONS

A psychophysiological method for training actors

Susana Bloch, Pedro Orthous and Guy Santibañez-H

INTRODUCTION

Concept of “acting behavior”

From a purely descriptive point of view, the phenomenon of acting can be characterized as a particular form of behavior produced at will by an actor in order to transmit gnostic and emotional information to an audience by word, gesture and posture within an artistic framework. This form of behavior, which we shall refer to as “acting behavior,” is the “representation” (playing) of “natural” (spontaneous or “real-life”) behavior, from which it differs by its spatio-temporal structure and by its physiological integration.¹

There are analogies and differences between “real-life” and “acting” behavior. They have similar effector patterns and similar effects on the observer. They differ in the stimuli that trigger them, as well as in the internal physiological and subjective states which accompany them. In a spontaneous emotion, for example, the emotogenic stimulation comes from the “real” world, either external or internal; in the “represented” or “played” emotion, the stimulus comes from a text, and the reaction is performed voluntarily in a predetermined place and at a programmed moment in time. Emotional behavior expressed on the stage cannot, therefore, be equivalent to the spontaneous emotion.

Acting behavior is a learned process and can therefore be taught. A systematic way of teaching someone how to act, that is to say, how to develop the tools and skills necessary for acting behavior, constitutes a training method. Such a method should contain a sequence of psychophysiological exercises which will tend to increase the ability of the actor to “represent,” that is, to transmit the gnostic and emotional information contained in a play, thus evoking in the public the corresponding intention of the author. The actor must learn how to use his body in order to express emotions, just as a singer must learn to use his voice or a pianist his hands. This requires mastering a series of technical abilities.

While different schools and methods exist for other artistic disciplines that involve bodily expression such as music, singing, mime and ballet, there are very

few methods providing systematic practical training for actors, especially in relation to the expression of emotions. Stanislavsky (1922) had already pointed out the lack of practical textbooks. In the Renaissance, actors of the Elizabethan Theatre learned to use specific hand gestures in order to denote different emotional states (Joseph 1951). Meyerhold (1922) proposed that scenic art should be called “biomechanics”: actors should be light and precise in their movements, and possess athletic qualifications obtained through acrobatic training, carried out even to grotesque and eccentric levels. This was a pedagogic method (see also Brown 1969).

In most drama schools of the European tradition, actors are trained to use their bodies. Is not the actor, after all, a specialist of the body (Barrault 1975)? In fact, a large number of physical training methods are available which are based, to varying degrees, on the “biomechanical” approach. For voice training, too, there exists a wide choice of methods.

What in our opinion is lacking in the curricula of most drama schools are instrumental techniques for learning how to express an emotion. While the gnostic-verbal (literary) and the body-expressive (physical) aspects of acting behavior are quite well covered pedagogically, the emotional-expressive (psychophysiological) aspects are almost entirely left to the intuition, life experience or “emotional memory” of the student actor, with little or no technical support. To become an actor, one must become an “*athlète affectif*” as Artaud (1964) puts it – an athlete of emotions (see also Esslin 1976). The question is *how*.

In spite of the fact that many prominent contemporary theatre directors (e.g. Brecht 1967b; Brook 1968; Grotowski 1969; Saint-Denis 1982) have dwelt on these matters from a creative, artistic, pedagogic and even sociopolitical (see Brecht) point of view, a psychophysiological approach to acting behavior has, to our knowledge, not yet been attempted.

Acting behavior and neuroscience

We consider behavior to be a psychophysiological process which depends on the integrative function of the neuroendocrine system. In this context, a method designed to teach “acting behavior” should at least fulfill the following requirements.

- 1 It should provide the actor with a technique for the voluntary control of the body or part of the body involved in the emotional and verbal behavior to be represented. For this purpose, special exercises involving specific groups of muscles must be developed.
- 2 It should provide the actor with the techniques needed to control the psychophysiological activation which may interfere with such exercises, that is, with the techniques needed to control the stress which appears during acting behavior, and to obtain an adequate balance of excitatory and inhibitory neural processes.
- 3 It should teach the actor to “simulate” an emotion. This means to learn to reproduce at will the respiratory, postural and facial configurations which correspond to “real-life” emotional behaviors.

Over the years, we have systematized a method for training actors to express emotions (BOS method), based on our findings on the effector patterns of emotions (Bloch *et al.* 1972; Bloch and Santibañez-H 1972; Santibañez-H 1976). Practice with the method has shown that it is sufficient to produce such patterns correctly in

order to evoke a particular emotion either in the actor and in the observer or only in the latter. In this article, we shall present the BOS method and show the validity of the above claim through our success in applying our findings to the training of actors.

Effector patterns of emotions

We have found that, in a normal person, for each emotional event there is a unique association between its effector-expressive and its subjective-feeling components. The specific configuration integrated by effector organs (such as muscles and viscera) which allows an observer to recognize one particular emotion as different from another one is what we call “the effector pattern of an emotion.” We have previously determined this by direct observation and by electrophysiological recording during emotional recall and reliving of emotional experiences, in normal, neurotic and hypnotized subjects (Bloch and Santibañez-H 1972; Santibañez-H 1976; Santibañez-H and Bloch 1986).

The effector pattern of an emotion is a particular configuration of neurovegetative, hormonal and neuromuscular reactions. From this complex physiological ensemble, we chose for the purpose of our training only the respiratory-postural-facial components because these can be started and modulated at will and carry with them most of the other features that are not directly under voluntary control. Accordingly, we are not considering within our training method physiological parameters such as heart rate, blood pressure, skin resistance, skin temperature and gland secretions which are part of the effector pattern but whose control is not needed for the recognition of an emotion by the observer.

Indeed, we have determined that each basic emotion can be evoked by a particular configuration composed of: (1) a breathing pattern, characterized by amplitude and frequency modulation; (2) a muscular activation characterized by a set of contracting and/or relaxing groups of muscles, defined in a particular posture; (3) a facial expression or mimicry characterized by the activation of different facial muscle patterns.

Emotions and acting behavior

The main finding of our research on emotions was that the subjective component of a particular emotional event can be aroused by the activation of the corresponding respiratory-postural-facial configuration (Bloch and Santibañez-H 1972): by “performing” the emotional “affection,” the subjective feeling can be triggered by what appears to be a sensory feedback mechanism. At the same time, we have found that if such retroaction is avoided by training, that is, by the systematic repetition (initiation and interruption) of the effector pattern, the subject may retain the expressive components of the emotion with very little of the subjective involvement. This turns out to be a necessary condition during stage acting, as the actor, required by the different spatio-temporal configurations of the dramatic performance, needs to move freely from the expression of one emotion to another. This is not possible within the time course of a “real-life” emotion.

BASIC EMOTIONS

Definition

We consider as “basic emotions” those types of emotional behaviors which are present in the human infant and in animals (at least in mammals), either as innate behaviors or apparent at very early stages of post-natal development. We are therefore dealing with the basic invariants of emotional behavior in a manner close to the meaning given to emotions by Darwin (1965 [1872]). In the description of the basic emotions, we are not considering the social and cultural aspects which certainly modify such emotional behaviors. Studies on the regulation of emotion in social interaction are currently being investigated by among others Scherer *et al.* (1983). For a review of the psychobiological literature, the reader is referred to Panksepp (1982).

We shall use in the presentation of our training method only the effector patterns of the following six basic emotional behaviors (see Bloch and Santibañez-H 1972; Santibañez-H and Bloch 1986): *happiness* (laughter, pleasure, joy); *sadness* (crying, sorrow, grief, depression); *fear* (anxiety, panic); *anger* (aggression, attack, hate); *eroticism* (sex, sensuality, lust); *tenderness* (filial love, maternal/paternal love, friendship).

In the observation of emotions, one can see that there is a *phasic* (transient, stimulus-bound) reaction and a *tonic* (maintained in time, not clearly stimulus-bound) state. The denominations in brackets in the list below belong to the category of the emotion in question and indicate differences in intensity and/or in whether the reaction is phasic or tonic. For example, depression is the tonic state corresponding to the same effector pattern as the phasic reaction of crying; anxiety corresponds to a maintained state of fear and hate to a chronic state of anger.

The basic emotions can be represented, from a postural point of view, on two axes, namely tension/relaxation and approach/avoidance. Such a representation may contribute to differentiating between the six basic emotions, setting the emotions of happiness, eroticism and tenderness apart from each of the others (Figure 17.1).

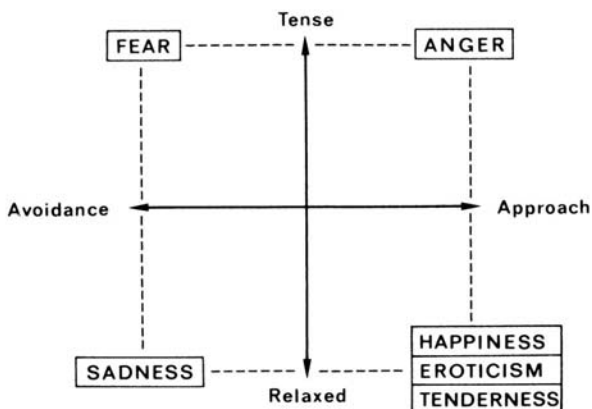


Fig. 17.1 A representation of the six basic emotions in terms of postural tension/relaxation and approach/avoidance parameters.

A finer differentiation among the three is given by the particular breathing pattern, the particular muscular activation within the given postural pattern and by the facial mimicry. Table 17.1 attempts to convey this information schematically with respect to the posture and breathing features, the facial expression not being included.

It is interesting to observe that though the three so-called positive emotions (happiness, tenderness and eroticism) are generally speaking relaxed and of an approaching nature, they clearly differ in their breathing pattern. With respect to eroticism and tenderness, while breathing is quite similar, the magnitude of the mouth aperture is different: open for the first and semi-closed in a smile for the second.

Description of the effector patterns

A brief description of the respiratory-postural-facial components of each basic emotion as analyzed earlier (Bloch and Santibañez-H 1972; Santibañez-H and Bloch 1986) will be given in an attempt to present the rationale behind the different exercises that were developed.

Happiness-laughter. The breathing is characterized by a deep and abrupt inspiratory movement followed by a series of short saccadic expirations which may even invade the expiratory pause. The posture is relaxed; the distribution of the phasic muscular tonus is quite particular, with a tendency to diminish in the extensor muscles, especially in the antigravitational groups. As a consequence, during laughter, subjects tend to sit or even to fall. The mouth is open, and the contraction of the *musculus caninus* and *m. zygomaticus* results in the exposure of the upper teeth. The eyelids are relaxed, and the eyes are semi-closed.

Sadness-crying. The breathing pattern is the opposite of that of laughter: rapid saccadic movements modulate the inspiratory phase in this case. This saccadic modulation may be prolonged into the expiratory phase and into the respiratory pause, but it is essentially the inspiration by saccadic bursts that characterizes this breathing pattern. The posture is relaxed and the antigravitational muscles tend to relax, particularly during the sharp expiratory movements leading the body to a posture in which flexion predominates (the body “hangs” as it were). The face

Table 17.1 Schematic representation of posture for the basic emotions.

Emotion	Posture	Direction	Main breathing trait
Happiness	R	Ap	Saccadic expiration (mouth open)
Sadness	R	Av	Saccadic inspiration (mouth open)
Fear	T	Av	Inspiratory apnea (mouth open)
Anger	T	Ap	Hyperventilation (mouth closed tight)
Eroticism	R	Ap	Small amplitude, low frequency (mouth open)
Tenderness	R	Ap	Small amplitude, low frequency (mouth closed in a relaxed smile)

Schematic representation of the posture in terms of predominant muscle tonus (T, tense; R, relaxed) and of the body main direction (Ap, approach; Av, avoidance) for each of the basic emotions. In the last column, the main breathing trait and mouth aperture are indicated.

adopts a particular expression produced by the relaxation of *m. masseter*, *m. peribulbaris* and the palpebral muscles. The eyes are semi-closed or tensely closed, and the brow is contracted by a frown.

Fear-anxiety. The effector pattern of this emotion is relatively complex because there are at least two types of reactions: a passive fear and an active one. Basically, it consists of a reaction of withdrawal from a stimulus, physical or not, which is perceived as dangerous. The effector pattern is characterized by a massive increase of the muscular tonus mainly affecting the antigravitational groups, e.g. those involved in the extension of the head. The respiratory pattern consists of a period of inspiratory hypopneic movements followed by passive incomplete exhalations, and sometimes by an expiratory-inspiratory “sigh-like” phase. The characteristic pattern can appear during a normal respiratory cycle, and it can be maintained during the time corresponding to several normal cycles. As a result, breathing is very irregular. The facial expression is characterized by an increase in the tonus of the facial muscles, by a large opening of the mouth and the eyes, which protrude with strong midriasis. This effector pattern corresponds to passive fear (“freezing reaction”), the body remaining immobile in a withdrawal or crouching-like position, arms and hands lifted in a protective gesture. In active fear, the pattern is modified by the consummatory reaction of running away.

Anger-aggression. The breathing pattern is characterized by high frequency and high amplitude. The muscular tonus is increased in all the anti-gravitational extensor muscles of the body, in particular in those muscles related to a posture of attack. The facial muscles are tense, and the lips are tightly pressed together; the eyes are semi-closed owing to the contraction of the superior palpebral muscles.

Sex-eroticism. The principal feature of sexual activation is an even breathing pattern which increases in frequency and amplitude depending on the intensity of the emotional engagement; inspiration occurs through a relaxed open mouth. The face muscles are relaxed, and the eyes are closed or semi-closed. In the female version of the erotic pattern, the head is tilted backwards, and the neck is exposed. The general distribution of tonus corresponds to a posture of relaxed approach; however, the *m. quadriceps femoris* and the *m. rectus abdominis* increase their tonic activity and, depending on the intensity of the emotion, tend to give phasic synchronized discharges. When the pattern is performed in dynamic postures, rhythmic pelvic movements are added, which increase in frequency as the pattern approaches consummatory behavior.

Tenderness. The breathing pattern is of low frequency with an even and regular rhythm; the mouth is semi-closed, the relaxed lips forming a slight smile. Facial and antigravitational muscles are very relaxed, eyes are open and relaxed, and the head is slightly tilted to the side. The postural attitude is one of approach. Softly touching, caressing and sensing with the hands are parts of the active pattern. Vocalization includes a humming type lullaby sound.

TRAINING PROCEDURE

Subjects

The following method was initially worked out in Santiago (Chile) with a group of 12 actors (8 males and 4 females aged between 22 and 26 years), who had just finished their three-year study program at the Theater School of the Universidad de Chile. They worked in groups for three hours twice a week at the university theatre, and also individually in our laboratory for interviewing and for recording different physiological functions. The training period and the experimental application for theatre performance extended over a period of two years.

General techniques

In order to approach correctly the described effector patterns, the actors were first trained to control their posture, to regulate their movements by modulating different degrees of muscular tension, and to work with breathing and relaxation. This was necessary so that they could later learn to simulate those motor reactions and breathing rhythms that take place during natural approach or avoidance behaviors, that is, behaviors leading toward or away from a stimulus (Table 17.1 and Figure 17.1). At the same time, exercises were developed to enlarge and enrich the actors' perceptual capacities and to control stress and inhibition. An up-to-date terminology was employed, and in some instances basic theoretical information was given in order to make the actor aware of certain psychophysiological processes that were taking place during the training.

The following techniques were worked out.

Techniques for controlling stress and muscular tension

Perception of muscular tension. At the beginning of the training, actors were instructed to contract and to relax different groups of muscles in order to become aware of the degree of muscular tension present. The exercises were done in lying, sitting, standing and walking positions.

Muscular relaxation. Once the subjects were aware of the different possible levels of muscular tension, a variety of techniques was used to induce relaxation in these muscles. In general, the subjects learned to adopt a slow respiratory rhythm, of which the expiratory phase and the respiratory pause were used to induce an active relaxation of the muscles in different postural conditions. A teacher of yoga led the group in a variety of yoga-like exercises. The Jacobson (1924) method for deep relaxation was used, but in fact any reliable method for inducing relaxation can be employed.

Respiratory training. The subjects (Ss) first learned to breathe at a slow rate with the deep complete abdomino-thoracic normal pattern, while lying, standing or walking. Then they would work with different controlled in-breathing/out-breathing tempos. Very gradually, some "hold" periods were introduced between inspiration and expiration, until breathing could be regulated at will with different timings. Since these are very delicate exercises, great care was taken, and individual surveillance was given in order to detect any possible effects (for example, dizziness owing to hyperventilation). The exercises were first done in supine and prone

positions and then while standing or walking. The different breathing rhythms were practiced until they were completely mastered; however, since the breathing pattern is the key point of our method, this basic breathing training was continually reinitiated throughout the work program.

Techniques for controlling motor activity during static and dynamic postures

Tonus modulation of groups of muscles with different postural backgrounds. Once the actors were able to perceive and control at will the tension of isolated or groups of muscles, they learned to integrate this ability into dynamic or static, bizarre postures. They learned to mimic, for example, different types of paralysis, different kinds of walking steps, different ways to deform, stretch or bend the body or parts of the body.

Vertical and horizontal dissociation of symmetric or asymmetric muscle groups. Exercises such as tensing one hand while relaxing the rest of the body; or tensing one foot and the opposite shoulder while keeping the rest of the body as relaxed as possible; or tensing the trunk while maintaining the head and extremities relaxed.

Facial musculature. Control of eye movements and apparent eye size with exercises such as tensing the eyelids with different degrees of eye apertures; working with the muscles of the brow and separate control of each eyebrow; exercises with facial “masks” in vertical and horizontal asymmetries, as, for instance, just tensing the left cheek and the right eye-brow.

Techniques for controlling inhibition

Exercises of physical disinhibition. The Ss were instructed to touch themselves and each other, to become aware of their own presence and that of those around them. Then they were told to undress completely while sitting or walking as naturally as possible; then to dress again and to undress, in quick succession. These actions were chronometered and repeated until the timing of both actions was about the same.

Exercises of verbal disinhibition. Ss were told to express their intimate feelings; to say dirty words or insults; to criticize the others; to express aggressive or tender thoughts; to perform “prohibited actions” or to adopt bizarre positions while saying something difficult or embarrassing.

Exercises of interference. The Ss were interrupted by the others or ridiculed while performing an action or reciting a poem.

All these exercises, which are particularly important for actors, were done in order to teach them in a very technical way to overcome shyness, to prevent stage fright and to concentrate and avoid distraction. Such exercises help an actor to be in control of what he/she is doing and at the same time to be open for the unexpected. This kind of training necessarily varies for different cultures, but it is always needed for actors whose profession by definition demands personal display.

Exploratory-cognitive exercises

Ss were trained to explore the space and objects around them with different sense organs (touch, taste, sight, hearing, smell) and to become aware of kinesthetic

information such as positions of their limbs and body in space. They worked at reacting quickly to sudden noises or signals ("startle" and "orienting" reflexes) in the body-tense or body-relaxed initial state. Exercises of avoidance, simulation of vomiting with stomach contractions and simulation of reactions to unpleasant smells were developed. Every time that it was possible, situations which naturally produce certain reactions were created, so that actors could become conscious of what happens in their bodies under such circumstances and learn to simulate them.

The concept of approach-avoidance behavior (curiosity and rejection) and the paradigm of unconditioned and conditioned reflexes were imparted and worked out with exercises illustrating them.

The general techniques that have been described up to now were preparatory and complementary to the training of performing the emotional effector patterns proper and provided the necessary baseline conditions for this training method. The next step was the training of the specific techniques for learning and executing the effector patterns of the basic emotions.

Specific training of the effector patterns

Technique for "simulation" of emotions

First, the actors were instructed to adopt a particular breathing pattern without being told the name of the corresponding emotion; then the postural component was added and, finally, the facial expression. The complete configuration was always worked out for each emotion in the same order: breathing-posture-face. The pattern was maintained until a stop signal was given. At the beginning, each subject would do the exercise individually, maintaining it from about 15 up to 80 seconds, depending on what was judged prudent by the experimenters. In the early stages of training, the exercise was, on a few occasions, purposely prolonged so that the Ss would begin to experience the subjective activation (feeling) of the particular emotion and could thus recognize what effect the exercise was having on them. This procedure was repeated two or three times, especially with those subjects who had difficulties with a particular emotion (one S for instance, would say that he did not know the experience of anger, or that at least he was unaware of it). Then a "stop; out" was verbally signaled, and the S had to end the exercise abruptly, immediately following it by two or three complete abdomino-thoracic breathing cycles. The subject was then asked to describe what he/she had felt while performing the exercise, whether he/she had "got into" the emotion, whether particular images had appeared and, as a whole, what his/her impressions were. In the following stages of training, the pattern was initiated, stopped and reinitiated in such rapid succession that practically no further subjective involvement would occur.

The entire procedure was done in a very technical and methodical way in the sense that while the S was doing the required breathing pattern, he/she was asked to tense or relax a particular part of the body and then to add the corresponding facial mimicry. In fact, we observed that the facial expression appeared by itself as soon as the breathing pattern started. No one particular pattern was worked with for more than 2 to 3 minutes. Other general exercises were then intercalated, and the pattern would be tried once or twice again. Great individual care was taken,

since controlled breathing and muscle tensing are very fatiguing and demanding on the Ss.

Once each effector pattern was well mastered, different modulations in intensity, different successions of patterns and different mixtures were worked out in order to develop the techniques gradually into a structured method. Actors could later use these techniques for characterizations and the building up of roles.

Modulation of intensity

The patterns were first learned with maximal intensity (that is, with the maximal muscular activation or relaxation) and with the particular breathing pattern in its most intensive, almost exaggerated form. Once the pattern was well practiced at such a level, the intensity was reduced. This was done by giving instructions for modulating (decreasing) the breathing pattern and for reducing, in a very controlled manner, the amount of muscular tension and/or the number of muscle groups involved. In this way, at least three different intensities of the emotional expression were obtained: (1) small; (2) medium; and (3) peak. The actors practiced until they could reproduce all degrees of the emotion, either at will or by instruction.

Emotional modulation of isolated movements, gestures, actions and vocalizations

Once the emotional patterns were well mastered in their basic effector components and in different degrees of intensity, exercises were developed in which an action or speech was modulated by different emotional patterns. Some of the previously described body or muscular symmetric and asymmetric contraction-relaxation exercises, and the exploratory-cognitive exercises were done with the different learned emotional effector patterns. This was done by modulating the patterns with different parts of the body, as for instance doing the “anger” pattern with only the corresponding breathing and the tension in the left arm. Simple actions were sometimes done in connection with an emotional pattern, as for example carrying a chair with “sadness.” In other exercises, the actor had to recite a simple poem or speak the lines of a text or sing a song, first in a neutral emotional tone and then while performing each of the learned effector patterns. These exercises prepared for the work with mixed emotions (see below).

“Stepping in” and “stepping out” of an emotional pattern

It is essential in this method to train the actors not only to adopt an emotional pattern at will, with rapidity, precision and adequate intensity, but also to stop the exercise with equal promptness as soon as a signal is given (as when the curtain falls).

The intensity with which the effector patterns are executed at the beginning of training may trigger the subjective feeling of the emotion. In order to avoid this, a strict technique was developed for abruptly ending every exercise where an emotional pattern had been activated, even if it had lasted for only a few seconds. The procedure was to give one or two deep and complete abdomino-thoracic normal breathing cycles and to perform a simple action such as wiping the face

with the hands, stretching the body or changing posture immediately after the signal “stop; out” had been given. This instruction was emphasized throughout the training until the actors really learned to do it automatically.

Succession of emotional patterns and “stage games”

The next step was to learn to switch from one pattern to another in quick succession. This was done in the following way: while a pattern was being performed, a signal was given for a quick switch either to a different pattern or to a change of one of the components of the same pattern. This kind of procedure was repeated until the subjects could go easily from one emotional pattern to another. Once this was well mastered, the actors, working in couples or in groups, were each assigned a given pattern with which to start the “game.” At the same time, they were instructed to perform an action and to be ready to switch to another pattern at a given signal. At least one brief normal breathing cycle was inserted between each change of pattern.

Procedure to work with “mixed” emotions

The most important repertoire of adult human emotional behavior consists in fact of mixed or blended emotions. By this, we mean that “pure” emotions are rare in everyday life and rare in plays (except maybe in some of the Greek tragedies). In our Western society, more often than not sex is mixed with aggression and fear, and anger gets side-tracked by sadness, only to reappear in disguised mixed forms such as sarcasm or verbal attack.

The method reported here allows actors to work technically with mixed emotions by assuming that these can be split into their component parts. Thus, the execution of a particular mixture may be done by combining parts of the effector pattern of one basic emotion with parts of the effector pattern of another one. A few such mixed combinations were analyzed and worked out during the course of the experimental training.

Pride. It consists of a particular blending of joy and anger. The actor was therefore trained to put some tension (degree 1) in the body, especially in the muscles of the back and the neck (the head is held high), and then to add a degree 1 of the laughter breathing.

Irony (sarcasm). It also consists of a mixture of anger and joy except that the proportions are different, so that this time the instruction was a small amount of tension in the legs and arms together with a degree 2 of joy breathing.

Jealousy. It consists of a blending of anger, fear and eroticism. The actor was told to contract the body, while breathing with the anger pattern and at the same time to open the eyes so as to give part of the facial pattern of fear. According to the situation, a degree 1 breathing of eroticism was alternated with the anger breathing.

Through an understanding of this basic procedure, each mixed emotion can be worked out by finding the right proportions of the “basic ingredients,” so to speak.

PHYSIOLOGICAL CONTROL

Trained actor

In order to monitor some of the physiological activation during the performance of the effector patterns, in one fully trained male actor we recorded the electrocardiogram (ECG), the pneumogram (respiratory movements) and the electromyogram (EMG) of the following muscles: *m. quadriceps femoris*, *m. rectus abdominis*, *m. brachioradialis*, *m. orbicularis oris* and *m. masseter*. The actor was lying on a couch in a soundproof, electrically shielded chamber. Contact electrodes (Beckman) were attached for ECG and EMG recording, and a transducer was placed around the chest for recording respiratory movements. The recording apparatus (Grass polygraph) was situated in an adjacent room. In order to obtain a control baseline, the actor was instructed to lie relaxed and to breathe normally, keeping as still as possible. He was then asked to start an emotional pattern, trying not to make overt movements, that is, just to change the breathing, the corresponding muscle tonus and the facial mimicry. The onset signal was the name of the trained basic emotion and the release signal the word “stop.” While the actor was performing the pattern, a professional photographer (Rene Roy) took pictures of his face. A polygraph recording of the above physiological indices during the execution of the anger pattern is shown in Figure 17.2.

No quantitative analysis was done at this point, and the recording should only be taken as a qualitative illustration of the activation patterns. The subject is breathing normally. As the word “anger” is signaled (upwards arrow), he starts to breathe with a higher frequency and a larger amplitude. A few seconds later, he tenses the muscles, mainly of the arms and legs, his face almost naturally following with the corresponding mimicry. When the stop signal is given (downwards arrow), the S immediately relaxes the face and the body, gives a few deep breathing cycles and

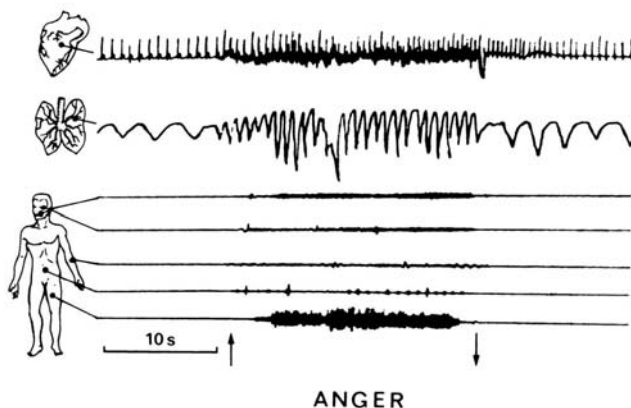


Fig. 17.2 A polygraphic recording during the anger effector pattern performed by an actor trained using this method. Upper trace, ECG; middle trace, pneumogram. Lower traces, EMG from top to bottom of *musculus orbicularis oris*, *m. masseter*, *m. brachioradialis*, *m. rectus abdominis* and *m. quadriceps femoris*.

then returns to normal baseline conditions. Heart rate is increased while the pattern is performed, the tachycardia persisting a few seconds after completion of the exercise.

Comparing physiological activation in the “simulated” emotion (trained actor) and the “natural” emotion, as seen under hypnosis

As seen in Figure 17.2, there is an abrupt initiation and cessation of the activation pattern during the actor’s “simulated” emotion, which shows the voluntary control of the pattern. Figure 17.3 depicts the pneumographic recordings during the emotions of anger, eroticism and sadness during the performed trained patterns (a) as compared to the corresponding “natural” emotions as recorded in a female non-actor S under deep hypnosis (b) (adapted from Bloch and Santibañez-H 1972). The experiments were carried out in different periods, and the pneumographs have been lined up only for comparison and illustration.

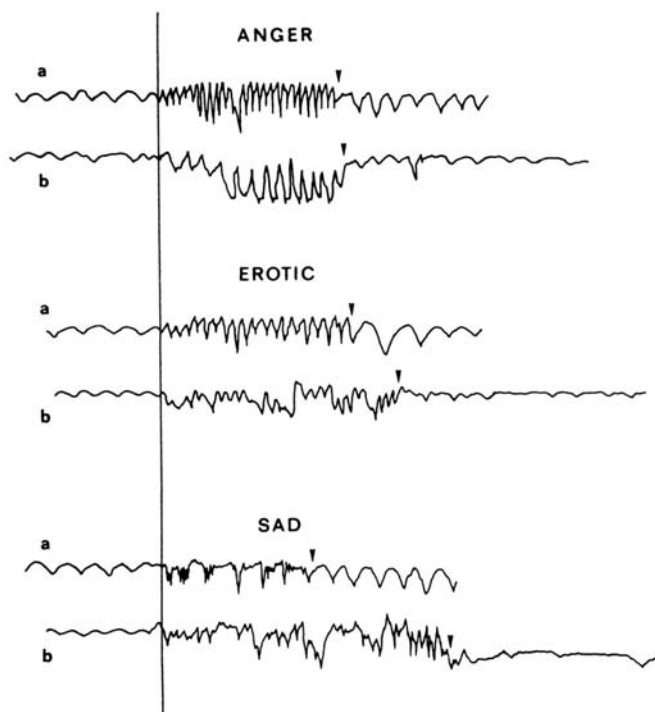


Fig. 17.3 Pneumographic recordings during “simulated” (a) and “natural” (b) emotions of anger, sadness, and eroticism (see text). The vertical line indicates the beginning of the actor’s execution of the corresponding effector pattern (a) and the emotional revival by a non-actor subject under hypnosis (b): the arrows indicate the end of the pattern. Traces: downwards, inspiration: upwards, expiration.

One can see that the breathing of the hypnotized S was also modified as soon as the suggestion to relive an emotional event taken from the S's personal history was given (vertical line). The changes in breathing were accompanied by the corresponding facial expression, muscular activation and subjective activation (report by the S).

It is interesting to remark that once the hypnotized S was told that the emotional situation had ended, the respiratory rhythm did not quite come back to the baseline rhythm preceding the onset of the suggested emotional revival. This observation would suggest that although the particular breathing pattern can be ended rather abruptly with the hypnotist's instruction, the aroused physiological state somewhat persists for a while. On the other hand one knows by experience that it is not possible to end abruptly the time course of a spontaneous or real-life emotion by simply withdrawing the emotogenic situation: both the physiological activation as well as the subjective arousal take some time to disappear. All of this suggests that an emotion relived under hypnosis has a close though not identical temporal configuration to that of a natural emotion.

Figure 17.4 shows the facial expression of the emotion of tenderness. On the left, the actor is executing the learned effector pattern of tenderness; on the right, the hypnotized S has been told that she is holding a baby in her arms. The remarkable resemblance in the expression of both persons reveals the evocative power of the trained effector pattern.



Fig. 17.4 Photographs illustrating the facial expression of tenderness. To the left, the face of an actor performing the learned respiratory-postural-facial effector pattern of the emotion; to the right, the expression of a subject (non-actor) to the hypnotical suggestion that she is holding a baby in her arms.

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE METHOD

For the actor

The general training

After working on the basic training for about eight months, the actors developed a perfect control of their breathing and were able to modulate it with different rhythms and intensities. They also learned to control their body musculature with correct, localized tensing/relaxing modulations of different muscle groups.

Considering that the actor's body is his performing instrument, it appeared to us as a surprise to realize that actors of the European tradition [training with this method has since been continued by one of us (S.B.) in Brazil, Denmark, Sweden and France] are quite unaware of their body-expressive possibilities. For example, at the beginning of the general training, actors would very often contract both arms when specifically asked to contract only one shoulder. The capacity to learn to dissociate different muscle groups and to combine such postural modifications with different breathing rhythms is very important as a preparation for the work with the "mixed emotions." The newly acquired skills therefore complement the physical training normally imparted in theatre schools.

This general preparatory work also taught the actors to relax better and to develop the correct balance of excitatory and inhibitory neural processes, which helps them to cope with stress, stage fright and shyness. For example, disinhibition exercises such as undressing were very important for the Chilean actors. At the beginning, undressing took about four times longer than dressing, showing that exposing a naked body is still a repressed behavior within our culture, even in actors.

The specific effector patterns training

Once the effector patterns proper were learned and mastered (the full training takes over two years), the actors could use them at will or under instruction in particular spatio-temporal configurations and with controlled intensities. They could switch from one pattern to another and do different stage actions with different patterns: for instance, taking a cup with a tense hand and then just relaxing the hand without modifying the breathing; or singing a song with the facial expression of joy and then changing the breathing into the crying pattern. The resulting changes in the action were immediately apparent and unequivocal to the observer. Such exercises were also preparatory for the work with the mixed emotions.

As the actors became more skilled in the execution of the patterns, more subtle and finer intensity modulations could be achieved. At the beginning, the patterns were worked at their maximal intensities in order to allow the actors to get well within the emotion. For example, in the case of anger the hyperventilation that develops with the required deep and fast breathing rhythm could be so strong that the subjects would often get dizzy; in such instances the pattern was only practiced for very short periods (15 seconds maximum) and was always interspaced with other exercises, with the strict routine of always ending it with the described "step-out" technique. In this strong form, the performed patterns often looked like

“overacting.” Later in the training, though, more localized tensions and more subtly controlled changes in the breathing could be achieved, and the actors learned to perform the patterns with smaller degrees of intensity without losing the particular structure of the pattern. In this way, practice with the techniques led progressively to a more artistic framework which is necessary for building up a role. Practice with the patterns developed a kind of sensitization, so that a very slight change in the pattern was later sufficient to produce a change in the modality of the emotional output which was clear for the S as well as for the observer. This is an important point, since on the stage long duration of an emotional state may be required, in which case the most extreme version of the pattern could not be sustained.

When a naive observer, or even one who is acquainted with the techniques, watches the correct execution of an emotional effector pattern, he/she considers the observed emotion as “true” as a spontaneous one. This was particularly striking when watching a sequence of what we have called “stage games,” where the trained actors would interact while performing a string of different patterns in swift succession, alternations and combinations. It was a totally arbitrary exercise in the sense that there was no plot; nevertheless, such pure expressive patterns executed in a certain sequence suggested a meaning to the observer. If the performers were then questioned as to whether they had “felt” the particular emotions portrayed, that is, whether they had been subjectively involved, the answer was that they had not “felt” the emotion and had concentrated only on executing as precisely as possible the instructions given by the experimenters.

This is quite good evidence that in order to appear “natural” or “true” on the stage, actors do not need to “feel” the emotion they are playing but must produce the correct effector-expressive output of the emotional behavior. If anything, in our opinion, subjective involvement and identification with the emotions may hinder the theatrical performance. In fact, it is possible that actors often confuse the unspecific excitation they feel during acting with the belief that they are truly “feeling” the emotion that they portray.

If, in the process of learning, a particular pattern was not correctly performed, the conveyed information was ambiguous, and the observer could immediately detect that something was wrong. For example, if during the laughing pattern the subject tensed the body, the perceived emotion was no longer one of joy. Simple correction of the tension allowed the intended message of joy to be conveyed. Interestingly, joy was found to be one of the most difficult emotional patterns to train, the main reason probably being the need for complete relaxation.

It is possible that spectators of a theatre play often feel that something is wrong or unconvincing in an actor’s performance because they perceive the lack of organic (psychophysiological) coherence in the expressive components of the represented emotion.

Advantages of the “step-out” technique

This technique is one of the main advantages of the method, as actors very often become identified with the emotions of the roles they play, frequently with neurotic after-effects.

We had frequently observed at the beginning of our work that the subjects tended to stay within the emotion, in other words the subjective feeling was often maintained over a few days. By repeatedly initiating and stopping the patterns using this precise technique, such after-effects could be largely eliminated. Accordingly, the essential rule was always to end any effector pattern exercise with a deep normal breathing cycle, and a change in posture was strictly observed. Such a procedure is a protection against any continuing subjective involvement, since a change in posture and in breathing determines a change in the internal state (subjectivity). Only during the initial stages of training was the pattern intentionally prolonged, in which case, if the pattern had been correctly performed, the actors reported having felt the beginning of the natural emotion.

Psychotherapeutic side effects

A clear benefit with respect to personal emotional problems can also be obtained with the use of the effector patterns. For example, one of the actresses had sexual inhibitions as a consequence of mixing eroticism with fear; this resulted in a great rigidity of her body posture during love scenes. Work was done with her with the fully developed erotic pattern, which helped her to perform such scenes more convincingly. At the same time, she reported to us an improvement in her private sexual life.

This method helps the actors to recognize their own emotions more clearly and to face some of their personal conflicts, which may constitute a professional handicap. At the same time, it enlarges their acting capacities and helps to free them from the exclusive dependence on personal life experience.

The work with mixed emotions

Finally, the effector patterns of the basic emotions can be used for working out the "mixed emotions." If an actor wants to show, for example, despair or impotence, which are a mixture of sadness, anger and fear, he can combine the breathing of sadness, the body tension of anger and part of the facial mimicry of fear. The training of such mixed patterns leads directly to the work of character building and theatre performance. An entire construction of the troll's scene in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* (Act II, Scene 6), a production directed by Horacio Muñoz in Denmark, was done with grotesque mixtures of this kind.

Possible evaluation of the method as applied to theatre performance

The results of our preliminary experiments in working out this method with professional actors (Bloch *et al.* 1972) will be briefly summarized here. A scene from Chekhov's *The Seagull* (Act III, Scene 5) was prepared. In order to be as close as possible to a scientific methodology and being well aware of the difficulty in judging theatrical output objectively, seven professional theatre directors were invited to see and judge two successive representations of the above-mentioned scene, as performed by a couple of "trained" actors and as performed by a "control" (untrained) couple. The couple of actors naturally less endowed for the roles with respect to type casting were intentionally chosen for the experimental group.

All four actors participated in the dramatic analysis of the scene, but only the experimental group was trained in the expression of the emotional sequences. The control group rehearsed the scene with the theatre director (Pedro Orthous) with the classical Stanislavsky's method of "physical actions" and "emotional memory" (Stanislavsky 1922). The experimental group received only general staging instructions from the same director. The scene was then presented before the selected audience twice by each couple. The directors-spectators had to judge as carefully as possible by rating from 1 to 3 the intensity and emotional quality of the behaviors contained in the scene. They were asked to assess the amount of relaxation and of body tension; the specificity of the reactions of approach and avoidance, and the precision in the expression of the emotions of tenderness, fear, anger and sadness contained in the scene. The observers were not informed as to which group was experimental. The average rating of the questionnaire gave 195 points for the experimental group against 134 for the control group.

The group of actors who worked with the effector patterns proper, as reported in this article, prepared and enacted *Antigone* by Sophocles after the training was finished, again with the artistic direction of Pedro Orthous. The text was analyzed in terms of basic and mixed emotions, and the role building was done by putting the acquired patterns into practice. For example, in the monologue spoken by Antigone to the citizens of Thebes, the mixed emotion of anger and grief was done by speaking the lines with the breathing pattern of crying and then adding tension in the neck and lower extremities. The result was very powerful, as judged by the reaction of the public. No attempt at rating was done this time, and work on possible evaluation of our method as applied to theatre performance is currently underway.

Application of the method to text analysis: possibility of developing a system of notation

This method also allows a psychophysiological analysis of a play in terms of "bits of acting behavior," giving the proper emotional sequences involved in each line of the text. In fact, there is practically nothing written for the theatre and therefore nothing occurring on the stage which is devoid of some degree of emotional tone. An emotional baseline can be outlined for each scene, on top of which an emotional "melody" of particular emotional reactions stands out. This is done by a rigorous dissection of the play, leading to a system of notation by which not only the movement plan is outlined but also the psychophysiological "emotional" plan is represented. In this way, a sort of emotional "partitura" can be noted in a clear and reproducible way.

This method also helps the actor and director to recognize and identify more clearly the emotional behaviors to be performed. It often occurs that the psychological language used in the theatre to denote emotions is too imprecise, and it certainly helps both actor and director to standardize their language using an up-to-date terminology.

Thus, with the collaborative effort of director, actors and psychophysiologicals, not only can the proposed effector patterns be successfully applied to theatre performance but also a system of semantic reference which unifies terminology can be developed for theatrical purposes.

CONCLUSIONS

The method described here (BOS method) results from considering acting as a particular form of behavior: acting behavior. As such, it implies the application of psychophysiological findings. This kind of approach brings the study of acting – up to now an almost exclusive domain of the arts – into the field of neuroscience.

The application of the method to the training of actors reveals that the correct performance of the effector patterns of emotions is sufficient to evoke the corresponding emotion in the observers (public). At the same time, the reports of the actors show that the correct execution of the effector patterns may trigger in themselves the corresponding subjective feeling. However, the results of the training also show that by a very precise technique of step-in and step-out of the effector pattern, the actor may retain the ability to perform the expressive components that evoke the corresponding emotion in the audience, without his/her subjective involvement. Finally, as a byproduct, the method helps to control the stress generated during work on the stage and by the same token may have a psychotherapeutic action.

In a recent experiment, Ekman *et al.* (1983) have shown that if an actor is instructed to produce just the facial prototype of a basic emotion, physiological changes occur which can distinguish among different emotions. What is particularly striking about their results is that the physiological indices were more marked when the facial prototype was performed than during the period in which the emotion was recalled. Such a result is in direct accordance with our findings and supports our contention that the execution of the effector pattern of an emotion actually triggers the corresponding emotional state. In our experimental protocol, the effector pattern is more complete and therefore more organic, as it involves not only the facial effectors but also the body posture and, most importantly, the breathing pattern. While Ekman and his colleagues propose that it is the contraction of facial muscles to produce universal emotion signals that brings forth an emotion-specific autonomic activity, we go one step further by saying that it is the performance of the respiratory-postural-facial pattern of an emotion that evokes the corresponding subjective activation or feeling in the performer as well as in the observer.

The experience that we have accumulated so far from using this method for training actors, for analyzing theatre plays and for assisting theatre direction allows us to formulate the following advantages for its use in acting and directing.

- 1 It defines the expression of an emotion in a concrete and precise way.
- 2 It standardizes the language, thus facilitating the communication between actor and director.
- 3 It helps the actor to regulate with more precision the different degrees of intensity of the required emotion.
- 4 It makes it possible for the actor to employ a technique to work with “mixed” emotions.
- 5 It contributes towards protecting the psychological balance of actors by providing them with a technique that makes it possible to bypass the subjective involvement.
- 6 It provides the actor with a quick and efficient technique to “step out” of an emotion, which further contributes to his/her psychological balance and at

the same time allows a more controlled flow of the emotions during the performance.

- 7 It helps to eliminate undesirable “cliches” by allowing the actor to present physiological parameters which are close to the genuine emotion.
- 8 It proves to be useful for text analysis and saves rehearsal time when compared with the classical Stanislavsky method of “affective memory.”
- 9 It proposes a system of notation for the “emotional” plan of a play

Actors trained with this method can use the patterns as a tool, that is, as a technical support for their acting behavior so as not to depend almost exclusively on their own personal experience and/or limitations. By no means does such a method pretend to replace the actor’s intuition, creativity and imagination.

Over the last decade, there has been growing interest in the study of emotions involving a number of different disciplines. We believe that our work connecting the scientific study of emotions to actors’ training and to theatre performance is an opening for interdisciplinary research between neuroscience and dramatic art.

Part III

(RE)CONSIDERING THE ACTOR IN PERFORMANCE

18

INTRODUCTION

Phillip B. Zarrilli

The essays included here explicitly address the strategies, techniques, theories, ideas, and approaches that particular actors or groups of actors have developed for performance.

ACTING AS A REVOLT AGAINST . . .

As should by now be evident, paradigms and techniques of acting have often defined themselves as a revolt against another paradigm, style, or set of techniques. For example, the Group Theatre and Lee Strasberg at the Actors' Studio in their formative years engaged in radical experimentation, especially concerning how improvisation and sense memory exercises were used to develop kinetic recall central to the American method's construction of theatrical characters (see Krasner 2000). Some of the Group's productions and exercises experimented with non-realistic modes of performance.

The experimentation and creative fervor which were part of the early work of the Group Theatre and Strasberg belie the systematization of the method during the 1950s and 1960s when the method became *the* way to train American actors. During this period it was often assumed that the American method had been directly derived from Stanislavsky. Many believed that actor training in Russia was similar to the techniques used in teaching the method in America. However, when director Jack Poggi traveled to Moscow in 1969 to observe actor training, he experienced the historical disjuncture between some American versions of Stanislavsky and the Stanislavsky system as it had evolved in Russia: "it soon became apparent that my conception of the Stanislavsky System (based on books and on the work in some New York studios) had little bearing on what I was actually seeing" (1973: 124; see also the more recent account by Merlin 2001). The training Poggi observed involved "meticulous line-by-line coaching to clarify the meaning of the text. I saw no improvisations, heard no discussion of 'objectives' or 'actions'" (1973: 125). P.V. Massalsky, a leading actor at the Moscow Art Theatre and teacher, explained to Poggi that what he was seeing was "the most important

phase [of the acting process in which] they find each action, however small. In 'the System' the essential thing is to be precise at every moment" (1973: 125). Poggi found that "the whole theory of 'subtext' boils down to a statement that the actor must know what he is talking about" (1973: 128). Poggi finally concluded that

The elaborate system that Stanislavsky worked out and set down in his books is a very different thing from the tradition that he handed down to the people I saw working at the Nemirovock-Danchenko School-Studio. In practice there is no "System" at all. Teachers coach students – that is all there is to it. Everything depends on the perception of the individual teacher, on how well he can see into the life of the text and communicate that life to his students.

The qualities I most admired in Russian actors, and the ones that seem to derive most directly from their training, are clarity and intelligence. They almost always seem to know exactly what they are doing – though of course I sometimes disagree with their choices. Because they tend to play each moment for what it is, their stage life is full of splendid surprises.

(Poggi 1973: 128, 131)

Reports like Poggi's prompted some actors and teachers of acting to (re)consider the relationship between Stanislavsky's own system as it evolved in Russia, and the quite different socio-historical, and political circumstances which helped to shape American method acting in the United States.

Although versions of the method have continued to dominate the training of the American actor, by 1972 Michael Kirby in his essay "On Acting and Not-Acting" (Chapter 4) announced that "the 'method' no longer has the absolute dominance it once did in this country, and certain alternative approaches are attracting great interest." Indeed, it could be said that American acting has been undergoing a lengthy period during which method techniques themselves and their role in the total training of the actor have been seriously reconsidered (see Mekler 1988) – a period that has been marked by the publication of a variety of new acting texts and books on acting.¹

Richard Hornby's *The End of Acting: A Radical View* (1992) is an intentionally polemical, and "unashamed attack on the American acting establishment" (1992: 1). His target is the Strasbergian method which Hornby asserts has bound American acting for the past sixty years:

[I]t is a mimetic theory, reflecting the influence of realism that prevailed in the theatre during Stanislavsky's early years, but has been adapted to suit the needs of a highly individualist, capitalist society.

The result generally ignores Stanislavsky's later work, specifically his "Method of Physical Action," which is why I prefer to call it Strasbergian rather than Stanislavskian; it is never tested and rarely challenged. In sum, it is more ideology than theory, and like other ideologies it is mindlessly and passionately espoused, and faithfully defended against earlier theories, long after all the adherents of those theories are dead. It shackles American acting.

(Hornby 1992: 5)

Speaking directly to American actors and teachers of acting, Hornby calls for the overthrow of a Strasbergian-based self-absorbed, classroom-based method of

training, and concludes that it should be used only as a special technique for film acting.

Hornby goes on to challenge many of the problematic assumptions which cropped up among some teachers of American method acting and which have confused American students of acting for years – its Cartesian mind/body dualism, the assumed polarity between internal and external and between realism and style (alternative disguises of Cartesian dualism), and the difference between “real” (everyday) and “imaginary” (theatrical) emotion. By historicizing both Stanislavsky and American versions of Stanislavskian realism, Hornby challenges the Historical manner in which American method acting has often been taught, calling realism “one acting style among many” (1992: 214).

Hornby’s call for an *End of Acting* would not end *all* acting, but would displace a Strasbergian method with a revised Stanislavskian based approach to character acting, emphasizing a return to the primacy of the dramatic text. Whether one considers Hornby’s view “radical” or not depends on how one positions oneself, not only in relation to Strasberg’s approach but also in relation to whether one considers playtext-based acting as radical or not. Hornby proposes an integrated model of acting “that sees it as a skilled, felt activity” (1992: 115), and gives primacy of place in “finding the character” to the later Stanislavsky’s Method of Physical Action as read through Stanislavsky’s disciple, Michael Chekhov.²

In addition to Hornby, another (re)consideration of acting is John Harrop’s *Acting* (1992). Like Hornby and many others among a new generation of acting teachers and commentators, Harrop uses as his primary metaphor the dynamic, active, and energetic image of the actor as skillful athlete. For Harrop the skill of the actor-as-athlete is built through a process which uses Stanislavsky’s system as “a template of acting process” – a template for textually-based character acting expanded from the *later* Stanislavsky’s Method of Physical Action.

Such overt hostility to the Method led David Krasner to edit a timely new book, *Method Acting Reconsidered* which would “set the record straight by explaining in full what Method acting means,” probe “the accomplishments of the Method” as well as “assess[ing] its relationship to other theories of performance” (2000: 3). In his introductory essay, “I Hate Strasberg: Method Bashing in the Academy,” Krasner identifies and then addresses four key criticisms usually leveled against the American Method: (1) that its approach to characterization is fixed; (2) that the Method devotes “attention to the self at the expense of the text” (2000: 16); (3) that the Method is only useful for kitchen-sink realism; and (4) that the Method is a betrayal of Stanislavsky. The collection of essays goes on to address a variety of theoretical issues raised by the Method; to describe various approaches to acting through the Method; to rethink the Method in relation to nonrealist theatre and emotion; and to provide descriptions of Method training at the Actors Studio, Neighborhood Playhouse and Stella Adler Conservatory. Dennis C. Beck’s “The Paradox of the Method Actor: Rethinking the Stanislavsky Legacy” argues for a clearer view of the distortions of Stanislavsky on both sides of the former Iron Curtain, and a recognition that Stanislavskian and Method concepts and techniques can certainly “accommodate the late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first century playfulness and questioning of identity formation” (in Krasner 2000: 262).

PLAYING POLITICS: (RE)CONSIDERING BRECHT, THE ACTOR, AND HIS LEGACY

John Rouse's "Brecht and the Contradictory Actor" (Chapter 19) helps us to understand why Bert States (Chapter 3) included the Brechtian actor-audience relationship as an example of the "collaborative mode" of acting in which the actor actively seeks to establish an open and immediate rapport and collaboration with the audience. Through this sketch of what Brecht expected of his actors during his post-war years at the Berliner Ensemble, it becomes clear that Brecht "not only encouraged the use of a wide variety of performance techniques, [but] structured his rehearsal process in a way that allowed these techniques to be subsumed in the service of his interpretational ends."³

As Ron Jenkins shows us (Chapter 20), Dario Fo combines a Brechtian politics with the "classic" audience/performer collaboration implicit in *commedia dell'arte* and town jesting to create his virtuosic "Brechtian clown." Most evident in his solo performances, Fo's acting foregrounds physical techniques through which he plays "all parts of himself to rhythmically orchestrate his entire body," and thereby creates an immediate relationship with his audiences.⁴

Although Augusto Boal directs "straight" plays, and even began his own theatre work in Brazil making extensive use of Stanislavskian-based acting techniques (Boal 1992: 40–59), when he eventually developed his Theatre of the Oppressed he took Brecht's notion of spectatorial collaboration with actors a step beyond both Brecht and Fo. As Richard Schechner says of Boal, "You have achieved what Brecht only dreamt of and wrote about: making a *useful* theatre that is entertaining, fun, and instructive. It is a different kind of theatre – a kind of social therapy . . . it focuses the mind, relaxes the spirit, and gives people a new handle on their situations" (Boal 1992: back cover).

Whether in Boal's Image Theatre exercises, in his Invisible Theatre pieces staged in "real life" settings such as restaurants or subways, in his "cop in the head" exercises (Boal 1990), or in his Forum Theatre interactions (Chapter 21), the "real" actors are not the actors/instigators who initiate a "performance," but rather the "spect-actors," that is, the spectators who are transformed into active "spect-actors." For Boal,

Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it . . . Theatre of the Oppressed is *theatre* in this most archaic application of the word. In this usage, all human beings are Actors (they act!) and Spectators (they observe!). They are Spect-Actors.

(Boal 1992: xxx–xxxi)

In Boal's theatre we move further and further away from theatre as a fiction to theatre as a force which is intended to actualize a change of conditions in the "real" world, whether social, political, ideological, and/or personal.

The theories of acting/paradigms of theatre examined thus far assume that the actor is a specialist who trains toward virtuosity in those "extra-daily" techniques and skills that are needed to perform. Boal's actors, when preparing an Invisible Theatre action or a Forum Theatre scenario or play, train like other actors toward virtuosity; however, they also must learn to be *enablers* by developing social, critical, and pedagogical skills. Boal's actors also guide a process of critical inquiry

around an issue to achieve what Boal “calls *metaxis*, the state of being critically aware of yourself on two levels – as *actor or doer* and as *analyzer or critical observer*” (Grady 1992: 18). Boal’s theatre “does not seek to manipulate people. At best, it liberates the spect-actors. At best, it stimulates them. At best, it transforms them into actors. Actor – he or she who acts” (1992: 39).⁵

NEGOTIATING NEW PATHS: ACTING BETWEEN BRECHT, STANISLAVSKY, AND FEMINISMS

As Rouse points out, Brecht’s theoretical statements about acting have often been both absolutized into an “inviolable theory of so-called Epic performance,” and compared to Stanislavsky’s system. There have been practical and political reasons to do so. The essay by Lauren Love (Chapter 22) is a specific example of the struggle to make use of sources *beyond* Stanislavsky and the American method, that is, in this period of (re)consideration some actors are negotiating their own performance process out of the spaces between feminism(s), Brecht, Stanislavskian, and American method(s) of acting. Love’s approach to feminist performance is informed by many recent developments in feminist theory and practice, and is marked by her own struggles with her past training in method acting and with a number of the assumptions in that training which as a feminist she finds problematic, and with the limitations imposed by her working conditions in a male dominant theatre. In negotiating her way toward a feminist approach to acting, Love draws upon a materialist feminist critique of the ideology of representation (Dolan 1988), and the constraints on identity that the apparatus of psychologically realistic acting places on the actress. Her concerns are similar to those voiced earlier by Jenkins and Ogden-Malouf:

“Method” acting, as it is traditionally taught, asks the performer to align with a part, to search for those self-revelations that are appropriate to a role. The acting coach or director frequently serves as an all-knowing guru for whom the performer must be absolutely vulnerable (opening the way to both psychological and sexual exploitation) . . . If an actress really knows the negative effects of what she is doing, she can only act if she effaces herself, if she becomes disembodied, if the belief she suspends is, in fact, a positive belief

(1985: 66).⁶

Love also draws on recent feminist (re)considerations of Brecht (Diamond 1988; Laughlin 1990; Reinelt 1990). Just as feminist theorist Elin Diamond conducts an intertextual reading of “key topoi” of feminist theory and Brechtian theory in order to recover “the radical potential of the Brechtian critique and a discovery, for feminist theory, of the specificity of theatre” (1988: 82), so Love in her approach to acting appropriates and exploits several “key topoi” of theory translated into practice, especially the Brechtian “not, but.”⁷ At the time Love authored the first edition of this essay, she clearly marked her position as provisional – a place on the way to a more complete realization of a feminist approach to acting which might only find a fuller expressivity when she begins to work with feminist directors, actors and designers – a goal she subsequently pursued by co-founding her own feminist theatre company in Chicago.

As noted in the general introduction, Rachel Rosenthal's life was radically altered after she "began to see that I could be an artist and be a woman." Influenced by both orthodox Western theatre and happenings, and having trained in everything from American method acting to Asian martial arts, Rosenthal's performances are, like Dario Fo's, a montage. Eelke Lampe, in her essay (Chapter 23), describes Rosenthal as making use of an "indirectly codified" performance vocabulary which she utilizes in her solo performances to move through a variety of transformations in which she constantly shifts roles, identities, and personae. Rosenthal's performance of personae frees her from the constraints of the single character, and allows her to play her multiply dynamic "selves" without being forced to conform to either socially or representationally inscribed limits of the "female" or "woman."

DEVELOPING AND PERFORMING A PERFORMANCE SCORE

In Chapter 24, Philip Auslander describes the personae that Willem Dafoe of the Wooster Group plays. Never creating discrete, psychologically three-dimensional, realistic characters, Dafoe's performances are "essentially a task, an activity: the persona he creates is the product of his own relation to the 'paces' he puts himself through in the course of an evening." Wooster Group actors each play a complex physical and vocal performance score. Auslander describes Dafoe's process, not as an interpretation of a role but as a re-enactment of decisions – an approach which leaves the performer free "to explore his own relationship to the task he is carrying out."

David Warrilow, in his search for alternative performance venues, joined Mabou Mines in its formative years to create opportunities to realize his own work as an actor. In Chapter 25 Laurie Lassiter allows us to see Warrilow's careful process through which he created physically-based scores for his performances which, through his attention to his breath, allowed him to refine his scores. For Warrilow "breathing [is] the one constant" in his performances. Especially noted for some of his Beckett roles, he came to "use the body as a way of creating symbol and cypher and of depicting energy in action and in space" to the point where he could play his performances/bodymind as a musical score. His art, therefore, has become concerned with "self-mastery."⁸

Ellen Halperin-Royer's account of Robert Wilson's rehearsal process for *Danton's Death*, provides an inside view of how Wilson works with actors through an entire production process. The essay puts to rest many false assumptions that actors may have about how Wilson works, and what he requires of actors. Working with a sense of detail similar to that of Brecht, Wilson created a complete "visual book" for *Danton's Death* which required physical and rhythmic precision, as well as total concentration, when enacting this score; however, the actors clearly felt that they had room to bring their own creative process into fulfilling the "edges" of that score. Some of the actors explained to Halperin-Royer, how they found Wilson's exacting emphasis on image and physical form liberating. Within such exactitude, Wilson was always looking for the actors to make "surprises" that would work against what the audience expects. The actors clearly had to develop strategies for finding a means of fulfilling some of Wilson's idiosyncratic directions, especially with regard to the physicalization of images. One of the most important discussions in the essay is the differentiation between the need for the actors to

connect emotionally and dynamically with their characters without falling into the trap of sentimentality.

Chapter 27 focuses on the remarkable performance work of Anna Deavere Smith. Since 1979 she has created a series of solo performances (*On the Road: A Search for American Character*) which attempt to “capture the personality of a place by attempting to embody its varied population and varied points of view in one person – myself.” In *Fires in the Mirror* Deavere Smith juxtaposes a series of detailed portraits of those actually involved in the Crown Heights, Brooklyn, riots. Carol Martin describes Deavere Smith’s process as more “documentary than ‘artistic’ in the usual sense” as she uses “hypernaturalistic mimesis” to bring to life 29 characters as they speak their own words in this performance. In the first part of the chapter Carol Martin interviews Anna Deavere Smith, providing an opportunity for discussion of politics, race, feminism, how she developed her own creative process, and how she has searched for alternative models to Stanislavskian acting from a variety of sources. In the second part of the chapter Richard Schechner provides a final reflection on Deavere Smith’s process of acting as a process of “incorporation.”

A FINAL NOTE

The rich diversity of paradigms, techniques, and strategies of acting described and analyzed in this second edition *Acting (Re)Considered* is remarkable. It is encouraging that many of the “old” prejudices and stereotypes about actors and acting continue to be challenged in professional and educational settings today, and that the place and role of discourse, analysis, and debate about acting and its paradigms is, if anything, louder today than ever before. All the better that when we enter the studio we can do our work well.

19

BRECHT AND THE CONTRADICTION ACTOR

John Rouse

Much material has been written on the subject of Brecht and the actor. The vast majority of this material, however, has focused on Brecht's various theoretical statements about acting, absolutizing them into an inviolate theory of so-called Epic performance and getting caught up in vaguely generalized comparisons between Brecht's "system" of acting and Stanislavsky's.¹ I would not want to deny the partial validity of these discussions or impugn the assistance they have given several generations of theatre people in understanding and making use of Brecht's accomplishments. Such discussions tend, however, to undervalue the fact that Brecht was not primarily a theoretician who sometimes directed in order to exemplify his principles, but rather a director who continually modified or reconstituted his theories on the basis of what he learned from his practice; as Brecht told a group of students in 1954, "one mustn't think of it as if there were someone with a specific conception of theatre that he wants to impose at all costs."² The *Short Organon* (1948), for example, is not Brecht's ultimate statement either about theatre in general or acting in particular. Rather, it is a position paper summarizing Brecht's thinking about his theatre work up to around 1947. During the remaining nine years of his life, Brecht constantly modified this thinking on the basis of his directorial and dramaturgical work at his Berliner Ensemble – as the many and varied amendments, clarifications, and counter-statements to the *Organon* collected in Volume 16 of the *Gesammelte Werke* make perfectly clear.

I am not attempting to insinuate that we should replace an absolutized characterization labeled "Brecht the theoretician" with an equally absolutized characterization that could be labeled "Brecht the director." Rather, I am suggesting that we cannot adequately understand Brecht's thinking about the theatre in general, and certainly not his thinking about acting, until we complement consideration of his theoretical perspectives with consideration of his practical work. This is hardly a task that can be accomplished in a single essay. Consequently, I should like here to sketch an overview of Brecht's work with his actors, or, more precisely, an overview of what Brecht expected the actor to contribute to the total complex of a theatrical production and how he worked with the actor

to fulfill this requirement. I should point out that this discussion will itself be fairly theoretical; only a pure description of Brecht's day-to-day work with his actors could hope to be anything else.³ I shall hope at least, however, to indicate the value of reconsidering the theoretical concepts Brecht develops in the *Organon* and the *Messinglauf Dialogues* in the light of his theatre practice.

My discussion will concentrate on only one phase of Brecht's practical work. Since Brecht was able to work concretely for an extended period of time with a carefully selected ensemble only during his postwar years at the Berliner Ensemble, this period can rightly be given priority for our discussion. Besides, it was the results of this work, as exemplified in the Ensemble's guest performances in Paris and London, that influenced practical theatre men like Giorgio Strehler, Roger Planchon, William Gaskill, and Peter Brook – and through them the entire European theatre of the mid-twentieth century.⁴

Even more significantly for our purposes, an overview of Brecht's work with his actors at the Ensemble underlines with particular clarity both the shift of emphasis that results when we consider Brecht's theory in light of his practice and some of the consequences of that shift. Brecht's theoretical writings abound with references to acting methods, both particular and general. As we shall see, however, Brecht was far less concerned with acting method than he was with the interpretive basis of the actor's work. In fact, as Brecht once told Peter Palitzsch during a discussion on Stanislavsky, his theatrical activity was not centered around the actor

as a point of departure. Stanislavsky directs primarily as an actor, I direct primarily as a playwright. . . . He begins with the actor. . . . [You] can also hear me say that everything depends on the actor, but I nevertheless begin completely with the play, its requirements and demands.

(Brecht 1967a: vol. 16, p. 865)

This begins as a statement defining the relationship between director and actor and ends up as a statement defining the relationship between director and text. The abrupt transition is instructive: Brecht reveals himself as a director who gives the text (or rather, as we shall see, his interpretation of the text) absolute priority. The actor's work, and the director's work with the actor, may be critically important, but they are important only in so far as they serve to realize the director's interpretational ends.⁵ If we are to understand what is unique about Brecht's work with the actor, therefore, we must first examine his directorial goals in terms of his work on the text. Only then can we adequately discuss the actor's particular contribution to the fulfillment of these goals and the particular kind of rehearsal process through which the actor develops this contribution.

The Brechtian theatre's most fundamental principle is its commitment to social change. The dramaturgical principle most basic to fulfilling this commitment is, in turn, that the theatre must attempt to present society and human nature as changeable. Theatre does not, however, depict either society or human nature directly, but rather through interpretive examples. As Brecht defines it, theatre "consists of the production of living illustrations of historical or imagined occurrences between people" (1967a: vol. 16, p. 663). This definition serves as the foundation both for Brecht's general theatre theory and for his directorial work on individual dramatic texts. Using Brecht's general perspective, the core of any text may be examined as a total composition, a structuring together in time of all the individual occurrences

that take place between the play's characters (see 1967a: vol. 16, p. 693). The original author's interpretation of his historical experience becomes visible in the character of the occurrences he chooses to illustrate and in the way in which he structures these occurrences together. Directorial interpretation, in turn, proceeds through the reworking of the occurrences illustrated and the restructuring of their relationship to each other. Brecht uses a special term to describe both the original composition of incidents and its interpretational re-composition, calling both "fables." He also emphasizes the predominant role of the interpretational fable in production work: "Everything depends on the fable; it is the heart of the theatrical production" (1967a: vol. 16, p. 693).

The first question such an interpretive approach must answer is whether one stresses the occurrences between characters or the characters themselves. Brecht is quite specific in his demand that production must shift focus away from the characters themselves to what happens between them. As he puts it, "from what happens *between* them, people get everything that can be discussed, criticized, changed" (1967a: vol. 16, p. 693).

This shift already carries with it a shift from the individual to the group and from the psychological to the sociological. In themselves, however, these shifts are not sufficient. Brecht sets two further requirements that clarify the ideological framework within which interpretation must take place. First, both the fable's occurrences and the relationship between them must be examined dialectically. As Brecht notes, the dialectical approach treats

social conditions as processes and pursues these in their contradictions. Everything exists to this perspective only inasmuch as it transforms itself. . . . This is also true for the feelings, opinions, and behavior of men, through which the contemporary mode of their social life together expresses itself.

(Brecht 1967a: vol.16, p. 682)

Brecht's theatre, then, concentrates on "the contradictions in people and their relationships." At the same time, however, a dialectical theatre must also reveal the "determinants under which [these contradictions] develop" (1967a: vol. 19, p. 547); further, it must reveal these determinants critically. Both these requirements are essentially part of the same concern – the depiction of the contradictory process through which men structure and restructure their lives and the critical examination of the ways in which these structures are used by men to repress other men. Historical determinants – the economic, political, and social factors that influence the social conditions of any historical period – must not simply be made recognizable. They must be made recognizable as constitutive elements in the individual occurrences between human beings:

One clearly must not think of *historical determinants* as dark powers (backgrounds); rather, they are made and maintained by men (and will be changed by them): they are constituted by what is being done right now.

(Brecht 1967a: vol. 16, p. 679)

Brecht is speaking here not about reality but about the theatrical illustration of reality. The theatre is for him precisely the place best suited to examine the social conditions in any historical period as constitutive elements in human relationships. This examination is what the director undertakes together with the actors as they

structure out the fable's examples of the moment-by-moment occurrences between people.

The first step in applying this general interpretational framework to a specific text involves the pre-rehearsal work of the director and dramaturgical colleagues. The text is treated as an historical document. The background of the text and its author are painstakingly researched in order to identify both the historical character of the social life being illustrated and the determinants that influence it. The text is then subjected to a dialectical analysis that reads its structures back into the historical experiences they mediate. Finally, the text's fable is recomposed in brief sentences that describe the fundamental action of each individual occurrence. Or rather, the sentences describe each occurrence as the production will elaborate it; Brecht's theatre is true to its interpretation of the text, not necessarily to the text itself, which may be left relatively untouched or drastically restructured.

The precision with which this dramaturgical approach focuses on each separate interaction between the play's characters is well illustrated by Brecht's directorial breakdown of the first scene of his own *Mother Courage*:

- Recruiters roam the country looking for cannon-fodder.
- Courage presents her family, acquired in various theatres of war, to a sergeant.
- The market woman defends her sons with a knife against the recruiters.
- She discovers that her sons are succumbing to the recruiters, and prophesies an early soldier's death for the sergeant.
- In order to scare them away from the war, she also lets her children draw the black mark.
- As a result of a small bit of bargaining, she ends up losing her brave son anyway.
- The sergeant prophesies something for Courage: he who would live off the war must also give it something.⁶

As in the Stanislavsky approach, this scene is broken down into its "beats"; indeed, the American-Stanislavskian term is an excellent equivalent to Brecht's "individual occurrence" (*Einzelgeschehnis*). From a Stanislavskian perspective, however, Brecht's breakdown remains a director's description of the fable rather than an actor's. The basic actions and relationships between all the characters in each beat have been sketched in, but the description does not center on any individual character's objectives, nor has a through-line of motivation been developed to link the various beats together. The concentration of effort at the level of the beat allows an assimilation of Stanislavsky's acting methods to Brechtian interpretational ends.

Brecht's actors were not encouraged to structure the separate beats smoothly together. On the contrary, Brecht considered the transitions between beats as significant as the beats themselves, and he demanded that these transitions occur dialectically. Each beat can be examined as a self-contained entity in which a particular interaction takes place or a particular situation arises. As Manfred Wekwerth points out, the personal and social forces that determine these relationships can change in respect to each other, bringing about an alteration in the situation; this change is marked by the evolving of one beat into another. On the other hand, each determining factor can suddenly pass over into its opposite, bringing about a completely new situation, marked by a sudden leap from one beat

to the next (Wekwerth 1975: 119).⁷ There need be no more unity either of character or of action between the beats than there is between the self-contained scenes around which Brecht's dramaturgy is structured on a larger scale. Indeed, Brecht made extensive use of all the possibilities inherent in a disunity of action in order to present the "development of characters, conditions, and events as discontinuous (in leaps)" (Brecht 1967a: vol. 16, p. 724).

The director's paramount task in rehearsals is to structure out the dialectical transitions between beats and the historically determined interactions between characters in the beats themselves. The descriptive reconstitution of the fable is already a first step in the development of a theatrical interpretation, but the fable still needs, of course, to be elaborated using all the means of the theatre. Most importantly, the fable depends on the actors, since they physically enact the events out of which the fable is composed. Consequently, their activities need themselves to be structured to achieve what appear, at first glance anyway, to be fundamentally directorial results. We shall, therefore, move from our consideration of Brecht's pre-rehearsal work to a consideration of the actor's contribution to his finished theatrical interpretation, putting aside for a moment the rather surprising process through which the actor perfected this contribution.

As Brecht states, the most important procedure by which the fable is presented to the audience is "the blocking, that is, the placing of the characters, the determination of their position regarding each other [there is a pun here in the German: '*Stellung*' refers both to physical and attitudinal position], changes in this position, entrances and exits. The blocking must tell the story intelligently" (1967a: vol. 16, p. 755).

The pun in the midst of what seems otherwise a fairly straightforward description of blocking should alert us that Brecht is talking here about something quite different from traffic directing. The German term for "*Arrangement*" perhaps comes closer to what Brecht is aiming for – an absolutely transparent physical elucidation of the fable. As Peter Palitzsch puts it, "the blocking and the *gestus* of the actors tell the fable in such a way that one could discover what is happening even if one couldn't hear anything. Transformations in the dialectic are marked on stage through transformations in the blocking."⁸

The importance of this kind of physical elaboration of the fable is reflected in the term "*gestus*," a word Brecht made up based on the German for "gesture" (*geste*) and which he somewhat confusingly defined in several different ways. Each of the fable's individual occurrences has what Brecht calls a "*grundgestus*" (1967a: vol. 16, p. 693). On one level, this *grundgestus* is simply the production staff's interpretation of each textual beat. Underlying this *grundgestus*, however, is the "*gesellschaftliche*" or "social" *gestus*: "the mimetic and gestural expression of the social relationships in which the people of a particular epoch stand to each other" (1967a: vol. 15, p. 346). The notion of *gestus* is thus, as Giorgio Strehler has pointed out, at bottom not an esthetic but a sociological one – sociological in that it allows historical determinants to be concretely manifested in the physical elaboration of the motivated actions that move the characters from beat to beat (Strehler 1977: 87–8).

This notion of the physical manifestation of historical determinants goes beyond the use of blocking to include the actor's smallest physical gesture. As Hans Curjel noted while observing Brecht rehearsing his 1948 *Antigone*, "The directorial method was based on investigation and varied experimentation that could extend

to the smallest gestures – eyes, fingers. . . . Brecht worked like a sculptor on and with the actor” (1967: 137–8). Curjel was also impressed by the ability of this approach to clarify and enliven the transitions between beats: “Certain pregnant behavioral motifs were extended over long passages of text and situation, to then be transformed into new gestures, basic behavior, or movement structures as if on hinges” (138).

The second beat in the first scene of Brecht’s 1950 adaptation of Lenz’s *Der Hofmeister* (*The Private Tutor*) provides an excellent example of this kind of detailed physical interpretive work. Läufer, having just told the audience in the Prologue that he intends to sell himself as a private tutor, approaches and bows to the Major (his prospective employer) and to his brother the Privy Councilor, who are discussing the terrible state of the economy. The two ignore Läufer, even when he repeats his bow three more times. In the middle of the fourth bow, he curses them under his breath. He then exits.

The beat is a brief one, but as staged it provided its audiences with some essential interpretive information about the relationship between the play’s characters. In the first place, the “bow” that the actor Hans Gaugler developed for his character was a highly stylized, highly exaggerated, very funny bit of actor technique. It was also far more elaborate than the “natural” bows of the period (Lenz’s play takes place around 1774), and it went lower to the ground – or to the feet of the Major, as the case may be. First established in this beat, it was used as a “quotable” gestural leitmotiv for Läufer throughout the production.⁹

As performed by Gaugler, Läufer’s bow also became a fine example of Brecht’s concept of “*Verfremdung*.” Despite all the critical blood that has been spilled over it, the term’s basic definition is quite simple: “A defamiliarized illustration is one that, while allowing the object to be recognized, at the same time makes it appear unfamiliar” (Brecht 1967a: vol. 16, p. 680). Brecht’s definition will, I hope, clarify why I have rejected either “alienation” or “distancing” in favor of “defamiliarization” as a translation of the term; Brecht’s ultimate point is that a spectator will not think about anything happening on stage if clichéd conventions or a mistaken naturalism make what is happening appear familiar. Everyone knows, for example, that people bowed to each other in the eighteenth century, so why should a bow be the stimulus for a critical social examination of an interpretation of occurrences between people? As Gaugler executed it, Läufer’s bow became a *gestus* that defamiliarized itself, forestalling any possibility of its being accepted as simply a customary greeting rather than the conscious action of a man who wants something from another man with more economic power.

This meaning is not, of course, explicit in the bow itself. Rather, it is a significance the audience could be led to recognize within the context both of Läufer’s expressed intentions in the Prologue (written by Brecht, not Lenz), and of the discussion on economic matters which the bow interrupts (by directorial design). The audience could, however, work through to this recognition only if instructed to examine the bow as an object of analysis.

Partly for this reason, the bow was emphasized twice over in performance. First, it was repeated four times, each bow more aggressively fawning than the last. The repeated ignoring by the Major and Privy Councilor of Läufer’s greeting thus became clearly the result of a conscious choice. Second, the bow was defamiliarized by the text itself.¹⁰ As Läufer executes his last, most fawning bow, he curses his two

“betters” under his breath: “Der Teufel hol Euch, Flegel [Go to the devil, louts]” (Brecht 1967a: vol. 6, p. 2335). Läufer’s language here (especially the choice of “*Flegel*”) recalls the way in which during this period people such as the Major talked to their servants, and not vice versa.

Läufer’s bow, its conscious rejection by the Major and the Privy Councilor, and Läufer’s response to this rejection all provide the audience not simply with information about Läufer but about the character of the play’s social relationships. Even as he grovels before them, Läufer holds his interlocutors in contempt; and they return the favor. The dialog in the beat following Läufer’s exit underlines this: the Major discusses his intention to hire this “lickspittle,” as the Privy Councilor calls him (1967a: vol. 6, p. 2335), because he comes cheap. Established in the bow and the reaction to it, the scene’s underlying social *gestus* is developed after Läufer’s exit.

Läufer’s bow illustrates the degree to which the dramaturgical and directorial interpretation of the script depends not only on the actor’s gestural work on his characterization but also on his gestural work in interaction with his fellow actors. Gaugler’s exaggeration of his character’s “natural” behavior is also as good a practical example as we are likely to get of Brecht’s concept of the actor standing beside the role in performance, at once demonstrating and commenting on the character’s behavior.

Our example from the *Hofmeister* is particularly clear in part because the beat’s *grundgestus* is focused in a single character *gestus*, in part because this *gestus* is so highly exaggerated. Such exaggerations are, however, better suited to comic texts than to straight dramatic ones. Indeed, Brecht once mentioned to Giorgio Strehler that his defamiliarizing acting style was much easier to achieve in comedies, since the comic form tends itself to defamiliarize its characters and events.¹¹ This is one reason why the Ensemble tended to use a much less gesturally over-elaborated style in its productions of serious texts, including such Brecht texts as *Mother Courage*.

This difference was, however, primarily one of degree. Brecht and his actors used stylization and exaggeration of gesture, intonation, or tempo in some of their most serious productions, although with a different emotional emphasis and a different balance between playing the role and demonstrating it. One of the best known “emotional” moments in Brecht’s theatre work, for example, is Helene Weigel’s silent scream in the 1951 *Courage* (an Ensemble revival of a production originally staged in 1949). As she hears the salvo that signals the execution of her son Swiss Cheese, Weigel’s *Courage* is seated on a low stool with her hands in her lap. She clenches her rough skirt, leaning forward with a straight, tense back as if shot in the stomach. At the same time, she thrusts her head straight back against her shoulders; her mouth tears open until it seems that her jaw will break, but no sound comes forth. For a moment, her whole physicality has the impossible, angular contortion of one of Picasso’s screaming horses in *Guernica*. Then she snaps her mouth shut, brings her torso and head back into alignment, and collapses the tension in her torso, slumping in on herself.

The moment is justifiably famous, both as an example of Weigel’s unmatched skill as an actress and as an example of the type of carefully elaborated physicality that the Ensemble’s actors were expected to develop in fulfilling their responsibility to the production interpretation. It is also an unabashedly emotional moment – an emotionality, however, carefully controlled and used both by Weigel and by the

production developing around her. In the first place, the very physicality of the moment moves it beyond the level of naturalistic grief with which an audience can empathize. We are shocked, stunned, shaken by Courage's grief, but we are not allowed to share it on the plane of petty emotional titillation. The technically accomplished extremity of Weigel's acting, in short, defamiliarizes Courage's grief through the very demonstration of that grief.

Moreover, both Brecht's play and his production allow Courage this intensely human moment in order to illustrate for the audience the basic social contradiction out of which the character is built. Courage is both businesswoman and mother. Or rather, she tries to be both; the social realities of the total war from which she tries to profit as businesswoman prevent her from fulfilling her responsibilities as mother. She has been confronted with a nearly impossible economic choice – either she lose her son or she pay a sum that will cost her the wagon, her only means of supporting herself and her daughter. But she has tried to avoid making this choice in attempting to deal her way out. Just prior to the execution, Courage has sent the prostitute Yvette offstage to bribe the soldiers holding Swiss Cheese. She is unwilling, however, to pay the ruinous sum demanded, and sends Yvette back again and again to bargain. Just before the salvo, she turns to the army chaplain whom she is hiding from his so-called religious enemies and comments haltingly that perhaps she has haggled too long. Sounds of gunfire teach both her and the audience that her delay is indeed costly. Courage bears responsibility for her own extreme moment of grief – a lesson underlined in performance by the simple expedient of having the chaplain, who is seated on a stool next to Courage, get up and walk away from her in the middle of her scream. Brecht allows Courage her grief, but he also uses it to provide his audience with the necessary data for a dialectical analysis of his play's social relationships.

Weigel's scream, although unusual in its degree of technical accomplishment, illustrates the way in which Brecht combined the actor's gestural elaboration of role with the careful elaboration of emotive and textual contexts. The characters' reactions to the scream provide Brecht's audiences with insight into the social contradictions affecting even the most seemingly personal, emotional behavior. As with Läufer's bow, this gestural elaboration could extend to the development of a basic physical *gestus*, centered on one or a series of quoted gestures, even for a straight dramatic character. *Courage* provides several examples of such a *gestus*, modified to suit the development of a dramatic character. One of the better known is Weigel's treatment of money. Every time she received payment in the course of her play's performance, Weigel's Courage would "mistrustfully" bite the coin to make sure it was real (Berlau, Brecht *et al.* 1952: 264). Now, this kind of gesture is certainly something any creative director or actor might invent while working on the play – assuming they understand the play's dialectics properly.

Still, Brecht's productions developed their fables so clearly, not because of any special magic, but because Brecht and his actors went to the trouble to understand and outline in performance vocabulary the story they were telling. Without the aid of Brecht's *Modellbuch* (a photographic and descriptive record of an Ensemble production intended to guide interpretation elsewhere), for example, it is doubtful that a director working within the conventions of the German theater of 1949 would have thought through to the telling variation of Courage's treatment of

money that Brecht and Weigel used at the very end of the play. Courage's daughter Katrin has been shot trying to alert the city of Halle to an impending enemy attack. Courage is now alone. She must drag her wagon herself back into the war, back into the train of the army that feeds her. She cannot afford to wait to bury Katrin herself, so she pays a peasant family to bury her daughter for her. She fishes a handful of coins from the leather purse at her waist, starts to hand them to the peasants, looks at the coins, hesitates, slowly puts one coin back in her purse, then gives the rest over in payment. Even as she displays her character's total personal collapse, Weigel demonstrates once again the basic contradiction between business-woman and mother that has led to that collapse.¹²

This last example, like the others we have examined, illustrates both the degree to which Brecht expected his actors to serve directorial interpretation and, at the same time, the degree to which this interpretation depended on the actor's contributions. On the other hand, the examples do not reveal the dominance of any single all-powerful acting technique, let alone the dominance of a global acting methodology, over either the actor's work or the director's demands. On the contrary, the examples reveal the application of virtually the full range of customary actor technique, from vocal and physical flexibility to precise emotional control. This fact, in turn, has a significant corollary: "There is *no* technique that *cannot* be used in the Brecht-theater, so long as it serves to expose the contradictions in processes in such a way that they can be pleasurably recognized by the spectator and lead to his own transformation" (Wekwerth 1980: 108). In fact, Brecht not only encouraged the use of a wide variety of performance techniques but also structured his rehearsal process in a way that allowed these techniques to be subsumed in the service of his interpretational ends. Since the nature of this process has a great deal to do with the strengths of performances such as Hans Gaugler's or Helene Weigel's, we will profit by turning back to it here.

Our examples from the *Hofmeister* and *Mother Courage* have underlined the degree to which the detailed "*Fabelbau*" – the building up of the fable – is the principal goal not simply of pre-rehearsal analysis but of rehearsal itself. The kind of detailed analysis of beats we saw in Brecht's *Courage* breakdown provides an anchor-point in rehearsals; when problems arise, one can check to see whether the fable is being told in the most effective way, or whether the right fable is being told. At the same time, the concrete discoveries made by the actors, director, and dramaturgs during rehearsals are used to tighten and fine-tune the analysis of the fable as its concrete theatrical elaboration is developed. The precise choreographic effect of Läufer's repeated bows, for example, is not something a directorial team can plan beforehand.

Or, at least, this effect is not something Brecht and his co-workers planned beforehand. Although Brecht went into rehearsals with a detailed description of the text and concrete plans for initial blocking to provide a structure for the exploration of character relationships, he did not begin rehearsals with a specific scheme of the final physical production. He knew what his goals were, but not the concrete measures necessary to achieve them. Consequently, he could maintain that "we develop pretty much from nothing, exploring the most varied possibilities. We speak the text, move around within the situations. Slowly we try to find out what is interesting. That is then kept, other things are let fall. We then develop the characterizations, and also the blocking" (1975: 125).

This kind of leisurely approach to the building up of the concrete production is clearly an essential safeguard against the impatient tendency to impose directorial decisions on the actor from outside – to treat the actor like a puppet. Consequently, Brecht took this approach seriously. Carl Weber remembers the first time he watched the Ensemble at work: Brecht, his assistants, and the actors stood around, smoked, talked, laughed. Every so often an actor would go up on stage and try one of thirty ways of falling off a table. Weber thought everyone was taking a break, until the horseplay went on long enough to make him realize he was watching the rehearsal (1967: 102–3) – a rehearsal, one suspects, devoted to the serious business of discovering the one way of falling off a table that will illuminate concretely its historical determinants.

Brecht's actors were encouraged to make their own discoveries – subject only to Brecht's dramaturgic principle that the fable retain dominance over its characters. Brecht suggested that this process of discovery and elaboration takes place in three broad and overlapping phases. The first of these extends through reading rehearsals and the early blocking rehearsals. It involves making a first acquaintance with the character by continually asking why that character does what it does: "you look assiduously for contradictions, for deviations from type, for the ugly in the beautiful and the beautiful in the ugly" (1967a: vol. 16, p. 843). This is also the phase during which the actor most intensely fulfills a specifically dramaturgical responsibility, studying the fable and familiarizing herself with the results of the production staff's background work: "The study of the role is at the same time a study of the fable; more precisely, it should at first be a [study] of the fable. . . . For this, the actor must mobilize his knowledge of the world and of people, and he must ask his questions as a dialectician" (1967a: vol. 16, p. 704).¹³ An actress playing Mother Courage, for example, would be expected to note that in one beat she attempts to protect her children by rigging the business of drawing for the black spot, while in the very next beat she ignores her children completely in order to swing a deal over a belt buckle, thereby letting Eilif get stolen out from under her nose. She would not, however, be asked to bridge this contradiction by developing a complex character conception; rather, this contradiction is the element to be explored in rehearsal. Clearly, this first phase is crucial – if the actor is not able to think along the same lines as the directorial staff, he will not be able later to teach his directors what they need to learn.

The second phase continues the work already done, but in an antithetical direction – one in which more than a few theoretical purists have assumed Brecht was not interested. As Brecht describes it, "the second phase is that of identification with the character [*Einfühlung*], the search for the character's truth in a subjective sense; you let it do what it wants to do, to hell with criticism as long as society provides what you need" (1967a: vol. 16, p. 843). The actor must explore her character in all the detail demanded by the most naturalistic director, but the criterion for selection among her discoveries remains the character's social behavior. Brecht never denied that there were character elements outside the realm of social determination, but he frequently pointed out that such aspects "hardly belong to the constitutive elements of the illustration of reality" (1967a: vol. 15, p. 282). Indeed, as Werner Hecht puts it, "we don't want 'characters' in the literal sense of the word on our stage, that is, people with engraved, unchangeable peculiarities that at best unfold themselves monadically. What interests us about people is their way of behaving, the historically conditioned reactions" (Hecht

1972: 151). With this orientation, it is hardly surprising that “Brecht in fact almost never spoke about the character of the stage figure during rehearsals, but rather about his way of behaving; he said virtually nothing about what a man is, but rather what he *does*. And when he did say anything about character, he related it not to the psychological but the sociological.”¹⁴

In fact, Brecht rarely spoke about individual characters in isolation. Rather, he exhorted his actors to create their characters dialectically with each other, to react rather than act: “The smallest social unit is not the individual; but two people. We create each other in life, too” (1967a: vol. 16, p. 688). Hence, Brecht could describe his second phase as one in which the actor lets the character react to the other characters, to the milieu, to the fable. As Brecht rather un-epically puts it, “this collecting process proceeds slowly until it then nevertheless takes a leap – until you leap into the final character, unite yourself with it” (1967a: vol. 16, p. 843).

Only when the work of this “naturalistic” or “Stanislavskian” phase has been completed can the third, antithetical, more properly “Brechtian” phase begin.¹⁵ During this phase the actor, having come to identify with the character, to know it from the inside, examines it once again “from outside, from the point of view of society,” and attempts to recapture the “mistrust and astonishment of the first phase” (1967a: vol. 16, pp. 843–4). It is primarily during this phase that the actors and director, using the insights won from a critical reexamination of the social behavior of the characters they have come to know intimately, structure out the final composition of gestures and positions that will elaborate the fable concretely in performance. The actor’s goal during this phase is not, however, to reject everything she has learned during the second phase lest the audience be contaminated by un-epic playing. Rather, as Brecht points out clearly in one of his 1954 appendixes to the *Organon*, the actor’s ultimate goal in performance is to achieve a dialectical unity between the gestural presentation of the character in his social relationships and a realistic emotional foundation won through identification:

Ignorant heads interpret the contradiction between playing (demonstration) and experiencing (identification) as if only the one or the other appeared in the actor’s work (or as if according to the *Short Organon* one only plays, according to the old technique one only experiences). In reality it is, of course, a matter of two competing processes that unite in the work of the actor. . . . Out of the struggle and the tension between the two antipodes . . . the actor draws his real impact.

(Brecht 1967a: vol. 16, p. 703)

Brecht, of course, did develop and discuss a number of his own techniques intended to enforce the dialectic between “playing” and “experiencing.” Most of these techniques were, strictly speaking, rehearsal exercises, such as having the actor speak the character’s lines in the third person or speak the stage directions along with her lines. Many of these exercises were, in fact, used at the Ensemble, particularly during the early productions, most notably the *Hofmeister*. They were, however, included when useful during the second and third stages of the actor’s work and without theoretical discussion about their epic purpose. Brecht knew that the practical workshop is not the place for theoretical discourse.¹⁶

Indeed, Herbert Blau is quite correct when he maintains that Brecht’s approach to acting is “more a matter of the environment created around the actor than a methodology of acting itself” (Blau 1961: 121). The concentration of communal

effort on the interpretation of dramatic texts may be seen as one element of this environment, the use of a leisurely approach to building up a production is another, the time committed to this approach a third. Underlying all of these, however, is the creation of true ensemble working methods. Only when directors, designers, dramaturgs, and actors work continuously together, using a shared dramaturgical approach and developing group methods to explore a number of productions treating texts from different historical periods and different genres, can they create the common vocabulary necessary to allow the ensemble members to use their particular training, experience, and techniques towards the creation of a production that bears the stamp not just of individuals but of a recognizable whole. That is something we should keep in mind when we try to characterize the distinctive quality of Brecht's work with the actor, and certainly if we try to make practical use of it.¹⁷

20

DARIO FO

The roar of the clown

Ron Jenkins

The intellectual complexity and bacchanalian passions of Dario Fo's epic comedy are usually reduced in translation to the flatness of a political cartoon. Even successful productions such as Rennie Davis' version of *We Won't Pay, We Won't Pay* leave the audience with the impression of Fo as a clever satirist whose work can be comfortably categorized as political theatre. This limited view ignores the subtler dimensions of Fo's talents. In their original versions Fo's plays are dense with poetic wordplay, visual references to medieval paintings, and sophisticated rhythmic structures that are lost by translators and directors who focus singlemindedly on Fo as a political clown.¹

Of course, there is a fundamentally political dimension to all of Fo's work, which includes mocking references to police brutality, government fraud, and social injustice. His recurring theatrical allusions to current events reflect Fo's commitment to a theatre that is politically relevant, but during the three months that I traveled with him and his company, he rarely spoke explicitly about politics. Rehearsals, seminars, and casual mealtime conversations revolved around topics such as the theatricality of regional dialects and the actor/audience relationship. Artistic concerns such as these are linked to political issues, but Fo manages to make the connections without waving flags as blatantly as do some of his adaptors abroad. An actress in the New York production of *We Won't Pay* referred to it as a "spoon waving" version of the play, because she was directed to play the role of a housewife by standing on the edge of the stage and waving a spoon at the audience as she lectured them on the evils of capitalism.

Fo's outrage against political and social injustice emerges more obliquely, as in the moment at the dinner table when the company's electrical technician asked him if he believed that people spoke regional dialects because they were too ignorant to speak "proper Italian." Fo responded with a spirited defense of the inherent beauty of the dialects and an attack on the Italian school system's policy of branding the variations as inferior. In his plays Fo uses a poetic blend of regional dialects, and it is clear that the choice reflects his commitment to the celebration of working class popular culture. What Fo's audiences hear onstage, however, is not a didactic

manifesto about the “language of the people,” but a magnificent cascade of coarse poetry that is an indirect tribute to the lyricism of the dialects spoken in Italy’s village markets.

Fo’s fusion of subversive politics and poetic slapstick is exemplified in his portrayal of Harlequin. Having been sent by his master to fetch a love potion, Harlequin uses it himself in a visit to a prostitute. When he returns home, Harlequin’s disobedience is betrayed by the fantastic and uncontrollable growth of his penis. Using his mimetic talents, Fo creates the illusion that his organ has become almost as big as Harlequin himself. To avoid detection he wraps it in a blanket and pretends it is a baby. All the women in the neighborhood coo and stroke it, resulting in a great comic situation. The focus of the comedy is ostensibly erotic, but at the heart of the piece is the servant’s revolt against his patron, the refusal of the impoverished Harlequin to submit to the master’s repressive rules. The humor is generated by the tension between Harlequin’s fear of his tyrannical master and his pleasure over his enhanced potency. Fo’s performance is an allegory of rebellion camouflaged behind a mask of crude buffoonery. The politics are clear, but they never overwhelm the piece’s exquisite slapstick poetics.

Fo blends politics and art with an effortless eloquence that makes him a Brechtian clown. Frequently describing the style of his theater as “epic,” Fo borrows Brecht’s terminology, but his points of reference go back to the medieval town jesters (*giullari*) and the *commedia dell’arte* players who were the originators of Italy’s epic comedy tradition. Looking to these models for inspiration, Fo has developed a modern style of epic performance that speaks to his audience with the immediacy of a newspaper editorial, shifts perspectives with the fluidity of cinematic montage, and pulsates with the rhythmic drive of a jazz improvisation.

A good example of Fo’s epic clowning can be found in his play about the relationship between Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth, *Elisabetta: Quasi per Caso una Donna*. Shakespeare never appears on stage, but Fo, playing a maidservant, acts out the entire plot of *Hamlet* for the head of Elizabeth’s secret police as he explains that it is a veiled satire of the Queen’s regime (Figure 20.1). Playing all the parts himself, Fo uses gestures and gibberish to re-enact the high points of Shakespeare’s tragedy in less than two minutes, as if the action were unfolding on high-speed film. The police captain is totally bewildered, and Fo has structured the episode so that the audience identifies the official’s dullness with the thickheadedness of modern Italian police investigators. Angered by the abusive mockery of her policies, Elizabeth tries to prevent Fo from recounting his second-hand Hamlet, but the clown is unstoppable. When she grabs his left hand, he continues miming the story behind his back with his right hand, and when she manages to tie up both his arms, he continues gesturing with his feet. The comedy of the scene is rooted in the muscular rhythms of Fo’s performance. The Queen’s clumsy attempts at physical censorship are no match for the irrepressible satiric impulses of the clown.

This style of densely-layered comedy appears frequently in the plays that Fo writes for his theatre ensemble, but the simplest way to isolate the essential techniques of Fo’s epic clowning is to look at examples drawn from his solo comic performances (Figure 20.2). In one-man plays such as *Mistero Buffo*, *Fabulazzo Osceno*, and *Storia della Tigre*, Fo demonstrates most clearly his genius for creating theatre that unites art and politics in a seamless comic blend. Among the key elements that give Fo’s performances their distinctive power are his musically



Fig. 20.1 In *Elisabetta: Quasi per Caso Una Donna* (1984), Fo performs a two-minute version of Hamlet in drag as the maidservant to Queen Elizabeth. (Photo by Corrado M. Falsini.)

orchestrated rhythms, his montage-like use of multiple perspectives, and the intimately immediate quality of his relationship with his public.

RHYTHM

When Fo directs rehearsals of his plays or critiques the work of his students, he always stresses the importance of rhythm. Fo is a musician as well as a playwright, and his theatre flows with a dynamic musicality that is generated by the basic emotional impulses of the situations he enacts. For example, his portrayal of a starving man in *The Grammelot of the Zanni* is structured around the rhythms of hunger as experienced by a fourteenth-century peasant.

The hungry Zanni is so famished that he begins to eat his own body, popping his eyeballs into his mouth and slurping up his disemboweled intestines as if they were pasta in a bowl. The action could easily become mired in infantile grotesquerie,



Fig. 20.2 Fo uses his face and hands to turn his one-man show into an epic spectacle. (Photo by Eugenio Bersani.)

but Fo makes it comic by cannibalizing himself with the rhythmic joy of a big band leader in full swing. The body parts are devoured with tempos of building excitement that culminate in percussive burps or climatic sighs of contentment. Although the piece is extremely funny, there is nothing frivolous about the mood Fo's rhythms evoke. There is never any doubt that the man is in pain, that he suffers not only a hunger for food but also a hunger for dignity and justice.

After consuming himself, the peasant challenges the complacency of God and the audience by threatening to eat them next, but he gets sidetracked by the dream of cooking a feast in an overstocked kitchen. His delirious fantasies are accompanied by the syncopated sounds of gurgling stews and sizzling oils. Fo creates all the effects himself with musical vocalizations that resemble a jazz singer scatting his way through a song. The piece concludes when the famished man wakes up from his dream and satisfies his cravings by eating a fly. He sucks the juice off the wings and savors each morsel of the insect with a primal howl of delight. Fo's performance is comparable to Chaplin's classic routine of eating a boiled shoe in *The Gold Rush*.

Fo's rhythmic pantomime is antithetical to the style of a performer such as Marcel Marceau. There is nothing refined, delicate or quiet about a performance by Dario Fo. It is full of crude sounds and coarse gestures expressing human desires and needs. Marceau's technique of pure mime calls attention to itself as something apart from everyday gesture. Fo submerges his technique in a flurry of sounds and movements. He seems to have just come off the subway and invented it all on the spot. Fo is full of passions, obscenities, odors, growls, and desires that could not exist in the ratified world of classical mime. These irrepressible urges give Fo's performances their inner pulse. The comic cadences of the hungry Zanni's actions are inseparable from his struggle to survive.

MONTAGE

The earthy rhythms of Fo's style are complemented by his ability to present a story from several perspectives successively rather than from a single point of view. In the enactment of Zanni's hunger, for instance, Fo first offers the grotesque fantasy of the man eating himself, then shifts to the pleasurable dream of a giant kitchen, and concludes with the stark portrait of a starving man eating a fly. All of this is presented in the context of a political/historical explanation for the man's hunger presented by Fo in his introductory prologue.

The shifts of perspective are intentional. Like Brecht, he wants his audience to see a situation from a variety of viewpoints so they can reflect on its multiple aspects, instead of simply losing themselves in empathy for a single point of view. In describing the way his epic style of characterization differs from traditional acting, Fo uses the analogy of a sculptor carving a statue. As a performer he circles a situation the way a sculptor circles an unfinished statue, examining the way the lights and shadows are formed when viewed from different directions.

Fo's technique of shifting perspectives is equivalent to cinematic montage. One of the most vivid examples of Fo's multiple-perspective storytelling is his satire of the attempted assassination of the Pope. Alone on the stage without props, Fo recreates the scene of the Pope's arrival in Spain. Fo becomes the people shouting their greetings in the welcoming crowd. Fo becomes the Pope's airplane, advertising its sacred passenger with a giant papal cap on top of its wings. Fo becomes one of the peasants explaining to another that the magnificently attired plane is not the Pope, but that the Pope is inside the plane. Images and characters appear and dissolve with a rapidity that gives the audience the impression of watching a televised news report of the event, with the camera angles changing every few seconds.

The Pope emerges from the door of the plane. Fo both portrays and describes him, presenting the scene in first and third person simultaneously. After showing the Pope in all the splendor of his jewels and colored robes, Fo slips out of the story completely to recount a newspaper article he had read recently that criticized the Pope's taste for opulence as the opposite of Christ's renouncement of material pleasures. Fo then quotes the Bible story in which Jesus was tempted by the devil with the power to fly all over the world. "Jesus said no to the devil," quips Fo, "but the Pope says 'yes'." Continuing to mock the pope's incessant world travels, Fo jokes that "God is everywhere, but the Pope's already been there."

Moving back to the newsreel images of the Pope, Fo portrays the gunman, the Bulgarian agents with walkie-talkies directing the gunman, the police asking the gunman what he is doing with the bullets, and the gunman replying that they are a new kind of rosary bead. He says a prayer as he loads each one into the chamber, and the guards leave him alone. Fo then resumes the role of narrator to wonder aloud why no one was able to stop the gunman, given that so many photographs were taken of him in varying phases of preparation for the assassination. Fo becomes a series of still photographs leading up to the gunshots, and he then acts out the fall of the wounded Pope, the television commentators announcing that the Pope has been shot in the sphincter, and the outraged Vatican spokesman who refuses to acknowledge that the Pope has a sphincter, insisting instead that the Pope's bowels should be referred to as a divine conduit.

Fo's looney tune version of the shooting leads to another quick change of perspective, this one more drastic, taking the audience to the twelfth century and the Papacy of Pope Boniface VIII. Fo's story is a twelfth-century illustration of the twentieth-century newspaper column describing the Pope as the opposite of Christ. Boniface is presented as he prepares himself for a public appearance, adorning himself in fine clothes, expensive rings, and elegant robes. When the Pope's procession meets the humbler procession of Jesus, Fo portrays Boniface's hypocrisy by showing him unrobing and covering himself with mud in feigned humility before Christ.

Up until the meeting with Jesus, Boniface has been satirized for his vanity and arrogance. When altar boys wrinkle his clothes he threatens to hang them by their tongues, a punishment, Fo explains, actually used by Boniface to deal with religious dissidents. Fo uses this graphic image as a recurring bit of black comedy. Each time the altar boys displease him, Boniface mimes hanging them by their tongues. Fo mimes hammering the tongue into the wall, then his hands become the tongue swinging in the wind. Next he transforms himself into a boy as he would appear if his body were hanging suspended from the tongue.

By shifting from the subject to the object of the threat and from the close-up of the tongue to a long shot of the hanging victim, Fo tells the story as if he were a camera shooting the scenes. The sequence is repeated several times throughout the piece from different angles and for shorter durations, as if miniature flashbacks of the original threat were inserted into a corner of the stage. With such montage techniques Fo insures that the audience never gets lost in the characterization of the Pope and is continually reminded of the contextual frame of religious tyranny within which the action takes place.

IMMEDIACY AND AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT

Fo talks to the public directly through prologs, intentional narrative interruptions, and improvised responses to spontaneous situations that arise onstage. Fo's intimate rapport with large crowds gives his performances an immediacy that elicits the public's active involvement in an ongoing dialog of ideas. Fo challenges the audience with a phrase or gestures, and they respond with laughter or applause. Using his public as a collaborator, Fo structures his monologues with the rhythms of their responses in mind. During his performances the integration of the audience seems unplanned, but when Fo advises other actors of his material in rehearsals, he explicitly directs them to anticipate the public's response at specific moments. Rehearsing monologues with student actors, Fo will play the role of the audience responding to each line, so that the student learns to transform the monologue into a dialogue with the public.

The immediacy of the audience is central to Fo's retelling of the miracle when Jesus turns water into wine. Fo initially presents two competing storytellers. One is an angel who tells the official version of the story in a detached style that does not take into account the public's desires. The other story teller is a drunk who claims to have been present at the miracle and offers an earthy account of the celebration that speaks more directly to the audience's spirit of revelry. The drunk plucks the angel's feathers, chases him away, and proceeds to tell his Dionysian version of the miracle, emphasizing the pleasures of drinking wine with an

inebriated ecstasy that serves as a direct call to the senses of his audience. He invites them to feel, smell, and taste the wine with him as he relives the pleasures of Jesus' miracle. In one sequence he drinks wine as if bathing in it, mimes the passage of the red liquid as it seeps through his veins, and expresses the depth of his pleasure with a gigantic burp that sends the aroma of the wine across the countryside. In a cinematic transition the expansive burp opens up the landscape of the action, and Fo presents the trail of the wine's aroma leading to a man on horseback who smells it and shouts out with gratitude, "Jesus sei di/vino" ("Jesus you are divine/of wine"). Fo's vocal and visual shifts have been building up to this climactic shout, which inevitably results in applause from the audience appreciating the pun. The sequence is structured in a way that would render its rhythms incomplete without the culminating punctuation of the audience's gleeful response.

Arguing that drinking wine could never be a sin if Jesus offered it to his mother, the drunk is implicitly urging the public to challenge the angel's pious attitudes and celebrate the liberating effects of wine. To strengthen his argument, the drunk reasons that Adam and Eve would never have been tempted by the snake to eat the apple if there had been wine in the garden for them to drink. The performance is a masterpiece of comic rhetoric designed to persuade the audience to abandon the angel's puritan point of view and accept a more joyous vision of religion. As the story progresses, the drunk's argument becomes funnier and more reasonable at the same time. The public is swayed by his comic logic about Adam in the garden of Eden: if Adam had been like the drunk, the human race would still be living in Paradise. Fo's success in persuading the audience can be measured in their roars of laughter and applause at moments such as the horseman's yell.

A TAPESTRY OF POLITICS AND POETRY

Fo weaves the technical elements of his epic clowning into a dense theatrical tapestry in which politics and poetry are inseparable. His comic rhythms grow out of the dialectic between freedom and oppression that is at the core of the stories he tells. Each slapstick crescendo is orchestrated around a liberating triumph over injustice. Generated by the conflict between the powerful and the powerless, the frantic tempo of Fo's farces is an implicit tribute to his characters' abilities to outwit their oppressors and survive.

Fo's montage-like use of shifting perspectives is linked to his political beliefs. Presenting a situation from multiple points of view enables him to emphasize the relationship between individual behavior and its cultural context. The theatrical jump-cuts in Fo's performances suggest a complex interaction between history, economics, religion, morality, and mundane current events. Fo's comedy exists at the overlap between the private and the public domains.

The relationship between Fo and his audiences reveals another aspect of this overlap. The public is included in the performance because Fo believes in their intelligence. He speaks to them with a direct and candid simplicity that transforms spectators into Fo's co-conspirators against injustice. All of Fo's techniques coalesce in the powerful conclusion to his story of Jesus and the wine. Having just presented Adam's rejection of the Serpent in favor of a glass of wine, the drunk

offers a toast to God, the audience, and the earth beneath his feet. Tilting the glass to the public, Fo is graciously thanking them for their involvement. Pouring a few drops on the ground he is paying homage to the earthy impulses that stand in opposition to the repressive censorship of the angel he battled at the beginning of the piece. And raising the glass toward heaven he shifts the focus from the mundane to the spiritual world. This simple, skyward motion is the last gesture of the story, and it is charged with startling eloquence. Having defied the authority of heaven, the buffoon strikes a pose that momentarily transforms him into an angel in spite of himself. The closing sequence epitomizes the spirit of Fo's epic clown in the breadth of its vision, the depth of its feeling, and the generosity with which it embraces the world beyond the stage.

21

FORUM THEATRE

Augusto Boal

Before coming to Europe, I had done a lot of Forum Theatre, in a number of Latin American countries, but always in “workshop” situations, never as a “performance.” Here in Europe, at the time of writing, I have already done several Forum Theatre sessions as performances.¹ In Latin America, the audience was generally small and homogeneous, the spect-actors almost always being the workers from one factory, the residents of a particular neighborhood, the congregation of a church, the students of a university, etc. Here, besides that kind of “workshop” forum, I have also done shows for hundreds of people who did not know each other at all. This is a new type of Forum Theatre, which I began to develop here, with some very positive results.

Also, most of the Forum Theatre pieces I did in Latin America had a “realistic” style. Here in Europe I have also done “symbolist” scenes, as was the case in Portugal for a work about agrarian reform.

THE RULES OF THE GAME

Forum Theatre is a sort of fight or game, and like all forms of game or fight there are rules. They can be modified, but they still exist, to ensure that all the players are involved in the same enterprise, and to facilitate the generation of serious and fruitful discussion.

DRAMATURGY

- 1 The text must clearly delineate the nature of each character, it must identify them precisely, so that the spect-actors can easily recognize each one’s ideology.
- 2 The original solutions proposed by the protagonist must contain at the very least one political or social error, which will be analyzed during the forum session. These errors must be clearly expressed and carefully rehearsed, in well-defined situations. This is because Forum Theatre is not propaganda theatre, it is not the old didactic theatre. It is pedagogical in the sense that we all learn

together, actors and audience. The play – or “model” – must present a mistake, a failure, so that the spect-actors will be spurred into finding solutions and inventing new ways of confronting oppression. We pose good questions, but the audience must supply good answers.

- 3 The piece can be of any genre (realism, symbolism, expressionism, etc.) except “surrealism” or the irrational; the style does not matter, as long as the objective is to discuss concrete situations (through the medium of theatre).

STAGING

- 1 The actors must have physical styles of playing which successfully articulate their characters’ ideology, work, social function, profession, etc. It is important that there is a logic to the characters’ evolution, and that they *do things*, or else the audience will be inclined to take their seats and do the “forum” without the theatre – by speech alone (without action) like a radio forum.
- 2 Every show must find the most suitable means of “expression” for its particular subject-matter; preferably this should be found by common consent with the public, either in the course of the presentation or by prior research.
- 3 Each character must be presented “visually,” in such a way as to be recognizable independently of their spoken script; also the costumes must be easy for the spect-actors to get in and out of, with the minimum of fuss.

THE PERFORMANCE GAME

The performance is an artistic and intellectual game played between actor and spect-actor.

- 1 To start off with, the show is performed as if it were a conventional play. A certain image of the world is presented.
- 2 The spect-actors are asked if they agree with the solutions advanced by the protagonist; they will probably say no. The audience is then told that the play is going to be done a second time, exactly as it was done the first time. The actors will try to bring the piece to the same end as before, and the spect-actors are to try to change it, showing that new solutions are possible and valid. In other words, the actors stand for a particular *vision of the world* and consequently will try to maintain that world as it is and ensure that things go exactly the same way . . . at least until a spect-actor intervenes and changes the vision of the world *as it is* into a world *as it could be*. It is vital to generate a degree of tension among the spect-actors – if no one changes the world it will stay as it is, if no one changes the play it will come to the same end as before.
- 3 The audience is informed that the first step is to take the protagonist’s place whenever he or she is making a mistake, in order to try to bring about a better solution. All they have to do is approach the playing area and shout “Stop!” Then, immediately, the actors must stop where they are without changing position. With the minimum delay, the spect-actor must say where he or she wants the scene taken from, indicating the relevant phrase, moment, or movement (whichever is easiest). The actors then start the scene again from the prescribed point, with the spect-actor as protagonist.

- 4 The actor who has been replaced does not immediately retire from the game; he or she stays on the sidelines as a sort of coach or supporter, to encourage the spect-actors and correct them if they start to go wrong. For example, in Portugal a peasant who was replacing the actor playing the part of the Boss started shouting “Long live socialism!” The replaced actor had to explain to her that, generally speaking, bosses are not great fans of socialism . . .
- 5 From the moment at which the spect-actor replaces the protagonist and begins to put forward a new solution, all the other actors transform themselves into agents of oppression, or, if they already were agents of oppression, they intensify their oppression, to show the spect-actor how difficult it is to change reality. The game is spect-actors – trying to find a new solution, trying to change the world – against actors – trying to hold them back, to force them to accept the world as it is. But of course the aim of the forum is not to win, but to learn and to train. The spectactors, by acting out their ideas, train for “real life” action; and actors and audience alike, by playing, learn the possible consequences of their actions. They learn the arsenal of the oppressors and the possible tactics and strategies of the oppressed.
- 6 If the spect-actor gives in, he or she drops out of the game, the actor takes up the role again, and the piece rapidly heads back towards the already known ending. Another spect-actor can then approach the stage, shout “Stop!” and say where he or she wants the play taken from, and the play will start again from that point. A new solution will be tried out.
- 7 At some point the spect-actor may eventually manage to break the oppression imposed by the actors. The actors must give in – one after another or all together. From this moment on, the spect-actors are invited to replace anyone they like, to show new forms of oppression which perhaps the actors are unaware of. This then becomes the game of spect-actor/protagonist against spect-actor/oppressor. Thus the oppression is subjected to the scrutiny of the spect-actors, who discuss (through their actions) ways of fighting it. All the actors, from off stage, carry on their work as coaches and supporters, each actor continuing to help and urge on his or her spect-actor.
- 8 One of the actors must also exercise the auxiliary function of joker, the wild card, leader of the game. It is up to him or her to explain the rules of the game, to correct errors made, and to encourage both parties not to stop playing. Indeed, the effect of the forum is all the more powerful if it is made entirely clear to the audience that if they do not change the world, no one will change it for them, and everything will inevitably turn out exactly the same – which is the last thing we would want to happen.
- 9 The knowledge which results from this investigation will, of necessity, be the best that that particular human social group can attain at that particular moment in time. The joker is not the president of a conference, he or she is not the custodian of the truth; the joker’s job is simply to try to ensure that those who know a little more get the chance to explain it, and that those who dare a little, dare a little more, and show what they are capable of.
- 10 The “forum” over, it is proposed that a “model of action for the future” be constructed, this model first to be played out by the spect-actors.

EXAMPLES OF FORUM THEATRE

1 Agrarian reform seen from a public bench

In Portugal, just after 25 April 1974, the people took agrarian reform into their own hands. They did not wait for a law to be passed, they simply occupied the unproductive land and made it productive. At the time of writing, the government intends to institute an agrarian law which will challenge the popular conquests on that front returning areas of land to their former owners (who made no use of them).

First action

The scene takes place on two benches in a garden. A man, the Landowner, is lying stretched out across both benches, taking his ease. Enter seven men and women singing “Grandula Vila Morena” by José Afonso, the Eurovision Song Contest tune used as the signal for the start of the military action which ousted the 50-year-old fascist Salazar-Caetano dictatorship.

The seven men and women evict the great Landowner from one of the two benches in which he is ensconced; in spite of his removal, they are none the less cramped on their one bench, because there are many of them.

Second action

They get down to work, miming the tasks of cultivation, while singing other popular songs. They start to discuss the need to push their conquest of public benches further. They take exception to the unproductiveness of the Landowner who has stayed put, with one bench all to himself, but opinions are divided: some want to turf him out, while others think that they have done enough already, that enough ground has been gained.

Third action

A Policeman comes along, bearing an order that they vacate 20cm of the collective bench (“the law of return”). They break into factions: some are for giving way, others are not, since to make a concession now would signify a victory for the forces of reaction, which would then gradually try to regain more ground. Eventually they give in.

Fourth action

The Landowner, protected by the Policeman, sits himself down on the vacated end of the bench. The seven others crowd in on the remaining section. The Landowner opens up a big umbrella, obscuring the light from the others. The seven protest. The Policeman declares that the Landowner is entitled to do what he is doing, since though the ground may be taken, the air is not. The seven are divided: some want to fight, others are happy with the little that they have obtained and want peace at any price.

Fifth action

The Policeman insists on the need to erect a wall dividing the collective bench into two parts, this wall to be built on “land” which does not belong to anyone; evidently the intention is that it will be built on the part of the bench occupied by the seven, not on the former owner’s side. More discussions, more divisions, more concessions. One of the seven abandons the struggle, a second also goes, then a third and a fourth.

Sixth action

The Policeman announces that the occupation is pointless since the majority of the occupants have abandoned the occupied land. Consequently, the last three are thrown out and the former owner reassumes his rights over both public benches.

The forum

This scene was performed at Porto and at Vila Nova de Gaia. On the day of the first performance, there were more than a thousand people on the square in the open air. The “model” was performed, then the “forum” began. On the second showing, a number of spect-actors enacted their vision of how to resist the Landowner’s counter-attack. But the best moment was when a woman in the audience protested. On the simple stage, there were some male spect-actors arguing among themselves – in role – about the best tactics to use; finally they decided that they were all of one mind and that the forum had been useful. At this point the woman in the audience said:

There you go, talking about oppression – that’s all very well; the only people on the stage are men from the audience, who don’t seem in the slightest oppressed by the actors, who were their deadly enemies a moment ago. And meanwhile, here in the audience, it’s us women who continue to be oppressed since we are just as inactive as before, sitting here, watching the men act!

One of the male spectators then invited several women to give vent to their feelings in the different roles. They agreed to do so, allowing only one man to remain on stage, the man who played the Policeman. As the woman said:

Since the Policeman is the number one oppressor, that part can certainly be played by a man.

2 The nuclear power station

In Sweden, the controversy over nuclear energy and the construction of power stations was very much a live issue. Some even said that the main reason for the gunning down of Prime Minister Olof Palme was his having affirmed that he would pursue a policy of nuclear gearing-up. His opponents said the opposite – and afterwards, they did it anyway.

First action

Eva is in her office, at work. The scene shows friends, the Boss, day-to-day problems, the process of finding new projects to work on, the daily grind of a hard life.

Second action

Eva is at home; her husband is out of work, their daughters are spendthrifts, they need money. A Female Friend drops round, they go out. They go straight to a demonstration against the construction of atomic power stations.

Third action

Back at the office. The Boss comes in whooping with joy: a new project has been accepted! Everyone celebrates the news! Champagne is consumed! Joy unbounded. . . . till the Boss explains what this new project is about – the development of a refrigeration system for a nuclear power station. Eva is torn; she needs work, she wants to support her fellow workers, but this situation poses a moral problem for her. She gives all the reasons she can for not accepting this new project, and her colleagues give their opposing reasons. Finally Eva gives in and accepts the job!

The forum

In this piece it was clear that the protagonist was going to have to commit an error and not be heroic. The audience almost cried when Eva gave in. And the effect of this was an extraordinary intensification of the fight – the game of actors/oppressors against spect-actors/oppressed – when it came to finding reasons for Eva to say no. Each time a spect-actor gave in and saw that she was beaten, the piece rapidly retraced its path towards Eva's "Yes." Passions in the audience ran high again till someone shouted "Stop!"; then the scene stopped and the new spect-actor tried a new solution starting from the first action, or the second, or even the third. Everything was analyzed: the husband's unemployment, the daughters' mania for consumption, Eva's indecision. Sometimes the analysis was purely "psychological," then another actor would come in and try to show the political side of the problem.

Should we be for or against nuclear power stations? Can one be against scientific progress? Can the word "progress" be applied to science when it leads us to the discovery of nuclear weapons?

And on the question of the disposal of "nuclear waste": surely it could be satisfactorily disposed of in a social system whose central value was the human being rather than the profit motive?

I have already twice had the opportunity to take part in pieces of this kind. The first time was in the USA, where an analogous piece had been written about the inhabitants of a town which was producing the napalm used in Vietnam. In the end, in the American example, the inhabitants accepted the factory, reaching the conclusion that it would be economically ruinous to close. . . . Ruinous for

whom? The second time was in Lisbon, again with a similar model: there is a refinery there which is causing a noticeable increase in the occurrence of lung cancer . . . but it is important for the economy. Here again, the residents gave way and resigned themselves to living with pollution, rather than living without jobs.

In this example, the function of Forum Theatre is quite clear: it is the other side of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, whose leading character, Stockman, faced with an identical situation, takes an heroic stance.

Who exactly is taking an heroic stance? The character, the fiction. What I want is for the spect-actor to take an heroic stance, not the character. I think it is perfectly clear: if Stockman is a hero and prefers to stand alone, not compromising his moral principles, that can serve as an example. But this is cathartic – Stockman has an heroic attitude and demands of me that I sympathize with his heroic attitude. He drains me of my desire to behave like a hero myself.

In Forum Theatre, the reverse mechanism is at work. The character gives in and I am called upon to correct him, to show him a possible right, to rectify his action. And in so doing within the fiction of the play, I am preparing myself to do it in reality as well. I come face to face with reality (fictitiously). I become acquainted with the difficulties which I will meet later – fear of unemployment, my fellow workers' arguments, etc. – and if I manage to overcome all these things in Forum Theatre, I will be better qualified to overcome them in reality when the situation arises. Forum Theatre does not produce catharsis: it produces a stimulant for our desire to change the world.

These forms of Theatre of the Oppressed have developed in response to concrete and particular political situations. When in 1971 the dictatorship in Brazil made it impossible for the people to present popular theatre, we started to work on Newspaper Theatre techniques,² which were forms of theatre easily realizable by the people, so that they would be able to produce their own theatre. In Argentina before the last elections (1973), when the level of repression eased (without completely disappearing), we started doing Invisible Theatre in trains and restaurants, in queues for shops, in markets. When certain conditions arose in Peru, we began to work on various forms of Forum Theatre so that the spect-actors would fully assume their function of protagonist, which is what they were at the time; we thought that the people would have a role to play in the near future. That was in 1973.

In fact, all of these forms of theatre emerged when we were barred from traditional and institutional theatre. An experiment I would love to try would be doing Forum Theatre in the theatre, in a conventional theatre building, with an advertised starting time for the show, with sets and costumes, with extant scripts, by single writers or written collectively.³

Would it not be wonderful to see a dance piece where the dancers danced in the first act, and in the second showed the audience how to dance? Would it not be wonderful to see a musical where in the first act the actors sang and in the second we all sang together?

What would also be wonderful would be a theatre show where we, the artists, would present our world-view in the first act and where in the second act, they, the audience, could create a new world.

Let them create it first in the theatre, in fiction, to be better prepared to create it outside afterwards, for real.

I think that this is how magicians should be: first they should do their magic to enchant us, then they should teach us their tricks. This is also how artists should be – we should be creators and also teach the public how to be creators, how to make art, so that we may all use that art together.

FORUM THEATRE: DOUBTS AND CERTAINTIES

Forum Theatre is still in its infancy, and much research and experimentation will be required before this new form reaches its full maturity; at present we are still at the stage of exploration, of finding and opening up new ways of working.

This particularly applies to the Forum Theatre “show.” In Latin America, I never took part in a “show”; all the Forum Theatre sessions were organized by a core group of people of homogeneous social origin, whose common interest was the resolution of relatively immediate problems. The Latin American experience had led me to construct a model ideal for Latin America, or at least for the particular experiments I had taken part in. The development of Forum Theatre in numerous directions in Europe inevitably entails a reconsideration of all the forms, structures, techniques, methods and processes of this kind of theatre. Everything is once again open to question.

THE FUNCTION OF THE WARM-UP

In all of the forum shows I have taken part in, there has always been an element of “warming-up” of spect-actors. Generally this is done in one of two possible ways.

- 1 Over ten or fifteen minutes, the joker explains Theatre of the Oppressed, recounts some experiences of forum shows or Invisible Theatre, and fixes the rules of the game which is to follow.

Then he proposes some exercises, starting with the simplest, the least off-putting, those that arouse the least resistance. For example, in Egypt, touching exercises provoked a very powerful resistance; which, by contrast, was far from the case with magistrates in Paris! It all depends on the culture, the country, the region, the moment.

After the exercises, we move on to Image Theatre. Here the spect-actors begin to work esthetically, and to suggest subject-matter for images themselves.

Then finally the group presents the anti-model, and from that starting point comes the forum.

- 2 I have in the past used, and seen others use, other less effective processes – starting immediately with exercises, with an explanation a posteriori. In these cases, I have noticed that a portion of the audience feels manipulated and reacts negatively. By contrast, when the explanation comes first, the joker almost always ends up winning over the audience, and gaining their acquiescence and their confidence.

This does not mean that the warm-up is absolutely indispensable. I believe it prepares the spect-actors for action. In any case, the thing which will best prepare them is really the subject-matter and the play itself. The case of *Het Trojaan Paard*, a

Belgian group from Antwerp, is significant; they have performed the same show, about the woman who is “a leader at work, a slave in the home,” in a hundred towns in Belgium and Holland (the group speak Flemish), without ever doing the slightest preliminary warm-up. They just explain what is going to happen. And the show is so evocative and so galvanizing that all the spect-actors always want to take part.

THE FUNCTION OF THE ACTOR

Forum Theatre demands a different style of acting. In certain African countries the people measure the talents of singers by the extent to which they can seduce their audiences into singing along with them. That is what should happen with good Forum Theatre actors. In their performances there must not be the slightest trace of the narcissism so commonly found in *closed* theatre shows, because the presentation of the anti-model should, by contrast, principally express doubt; each action should contain its own negation; each phrase should leave open the possibility of saying the opposite of what is being said; each *yes* allows for an imagined *no*, or a *perhaps*.

During the forum proper, actors must be extremely dialectical. When they take up a counter-stance against a spect-actor/protagonist who wants to break the oppression, they must be honest and show that the oppression is not so easily defeated. They must show the difficulties which will appear, while retaining a manner which encourages the spect-actor to break the oppression. This means that, while still countering every phrase and action, they should awaken in the spect-actor other stances, other approaches. While impeding the attempt to break the oppression, they should rouse the spect-actor to achieve it.

If the actor is too firm, it can discourage or, worse still, frighten the spect-actor. If the actor is too soft and vulnerable, with no counterarguments or counteractions, it can mislead the spect-actor into believing that the problem posed by the play is easier to resolve than he or she thought.

In Berlin, at the Hochschule der Kunst, a forum showed a young man trying to convince his family to give him a certain sum of money per month. In order to achieve this, he had to undergo endless rituals, family conversations and reunions, discussions about the war, about the past, about members of the family who had disappeared, etc. The actors were so enthusiastic that every spect-actor who came forward was subjected to an avalanche of arguments, to such an extent that very soon the whole audience was up in arms and shouted in unison “Stop – that’s magic!”, concluding that no family could be as fearsomely exasperating as that.

I repeat, the actors must be dialectical, must know how to give and take, how to hold back and lead on, how to be creative. They must feel no fear (which is common with professional actors) of losing their place, of standing aside. A great magician is someone who knows not only how to do magic but also how to teach tricks to others. A great footballer loses no status by teaching someone else how to shoot with both feet.

One learns by teaching others. Pedagogy is transitive. Or it is not pedagogy.

[Editor’s note: This brief essay, translated by Adrian Jackson is excerpted from Augusto Boal’s *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (London: Routledge, 1992) and is published by permission of Routledge, the author, and translator.]

RESISTING THE “ORGANIC”

A feminist actor's approach

Lauren Love

For an actor working in conventional theatre, committing to feminist performance strategies may seem contradictory, if not outright impossible. My own experiences in conventional Western theatre productions became increasingly frustrating, because my corporeal presence within its representational frames demanded my complicity with an ideology I seek to resist. The very fact of my female-gendered biology on a conventional stage, not only commodifies my presence – where I become an object to be traded between the male characters and the male spectators – but has also been complicated by feminist theorists like Judith Butler who discuss materiality itself as a reiteration of restrictive codes relating to gender and sexuality. Butler and others ask whether the female-gendered body can appear as a body that matters (Butler in Goodman 1998: 286) within discourses that privilege male bodies as active social agents. Are recognizably female bodies only visible as the passive/receptive opposites of male bodies? If the female body can as Butler proposes, only be intelligible through regulatory schemas (ibid: 284), how is it possible to perform female subjectivity without reinforcing patriarchal discourses that deny that subjectivity?

In *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*, Jill Dolan asserts that: placing women in a representation always connotes an underlying ideology and presents a narrative driven by male desire that effectively denies women's subjectivity (1988: 57). Given that the terms of women's objectification are not questioned and are in fact reified in conventional representational modes, how might I reconcile my politics with my work as an actor in conventional theatre? What is my potential to resist objectification and/or material devaluation from a position within conventional representation?

Materialist feminist theories, which borrow from the discourses of Marxism, semiotics, post-modern philosophies, and other discourses that seek to destabilize naturalized dominant ideology, seem to offer the most viable possibilities for the feminist performer to conceptualize resistant tactics.

Materialist feminists point to the construction of gender, class and race through normalizing cultural strategies that reinforce the hegemony of a male,

Western-European American middle-class. In materialist discourse gender is not innate. Rather it is dictated through enculturation, as gender divisions are placed at the service of the dominant culture's ideology (Dolan 1988: 19). Constructing the female gender as passive and the male as active, as modern realist/naturalist theatre has done, places women as objects and men as subjects of the conventional linear narrative favored on North American mainstream stages.

The male spectator of conventional representation is invited to identify with the male subjects of a narrative and to take the female characters as the objects of his desire and/or as the catalysts for his plan of action within that narrative. The male spectator identifies himself with/as the male protagonist (see Laura Mulvey's seminal essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in *Screen*, 16, 3: Autumn 1975). What then, are the available modes of reading these narratives for female spectators? "If she identifies with the narrative's objectified, passive woman, she becomes complicit in her own indirect objectification. If, . . . she admires the represented female body as a consumable object, she participates in her own commodification" (Dolan 1988: 13). The female performer in conventional theatre is also implicated, possibly to an even greater degree, because she becomes the objectified body – she stands for the body that does not matter. As a performer and a feminist, I have had to re-examine my participation in this exchange. Could I as a performer, provoke audience members to see the story differently by revealing the genderized/sexualized terms of its address? And would that resistance to ways of playing Woman on stage create any spaces for seeing our assumptions differently?

In light of feminist theoretical work toward deconstructing conventional Western theatre texts and the untenable positions available to female characters, readers, spectators and performers in relation to those texts, I have sought to formulate an acting technique that would bridge feminist theory and practice and enact a resistance to the dominant codes which I seek to resist rather than reify. I continue to wonder whether I can apply the skills I acquired as an acting student to feminist strategies of resistance, or whether they are too mired in oppressive ideological systems to use successfully.

Much of my actor training¹ was rooted in the method practiced and described by Constantin Stanislavsky as that system was in turn re-described and practiced by various acting teachers in the United States. "Truth" was Stanislavsky's aim for art, and the approach he developed for the actor was significantly influenced by the growing but relatively new science of psychology. Stanislavsky often discussed theatre and acting as projects that would seek out, discover and celebrate so-called universal human attributes and values. Post-modern, materialist feminist and queer theory discourses (among others) problematize this essentialism, noting that it fantasizes an ontological space which is untouched by ideological operations and contestations. Psychological realism as a genre in theatre and the method acting approach which is designed to serve its principles, rehearse liberal humanist ideals that privilege dominant ideologies as "natural." The "truths" to which Stanislavsky's acting students are passionately required to aspire, are embedded in mainstream values that help to stabilize hegemonic class privileges. Stanislavsky's writing about the new realist playwrights of his time reveal his unconditional belief in their value for a modernist, humanist agenda. Consequently, Stanislavsky seeks to endow actors with the ability to give themselves over to the terms dictated by those playwrights in whom he has the utmost faith.

The Method approach has been taught to American actors as a tool for "truthful" acting, which masks its dependence on psychology and other liberal humanist discourses. Uta Hagen, a renowned American acting teacher whose text, *Respect for Acting*, served as my basic primer, claims that the Method's techniques are appropriate for any theatrical style. According to Hagen, psychology exists outside of ideology, and, therefore, can be applied to any theatrical genre. While various genres are recognized as constructions, psychology is promoted as a tool through which the actor can reveal each genre's essential meanings.

The illusion that the actor is creating "real people" on stage denies the fact that her/his personal identity and her/his acting methods are themselves constructed within those restrictive schema to which Butler refers.

The migration of the term "organic" itself from within the details of Stanislavsky's translated descriptions of his acting theory to a nominal description of a presumed monolithic system formulated by him, is indicative of the appropriation and further normalization of Stanislavsky's exercises, experiments and ideas by twentieth-century American actor training programs. Although the transmission of Stanislavsky-inflected techniques has undoubtedly taken myriad forms, I suggest that these variations center on the theme of psychological processes (as delineated by Freud) as the privileged, indeed exclusive, route toward creating a character.

Challenging the Method's rules for creating a believable character becomes more difficult because they purport to flow logically from the empirical "truth of lived experience." Describing a technique in this way, as an organic process, helps to secure the actor's complicity with its principles and by extension with dominant cultural modalities. Most problematically for myself as a feminist performer, was the intrinsic insistence in my training through organic techniques, that a deep concentration on the inner life of the character would obviate the need for conscious awareness of one's body on stage. How could I hope to embody female agency were I to deliberately forget what my body was doing during a performance? Stanislavsky encourages the actor to prepare physically to respond truthfully as the character within each moment. In *System and Methods of Creative Art*, Stanislavsky describes his own working process as an actor in Ibsen: "The moment I thought of Dr. Stockmann's thoughts and worries, his shortsightedness appeared by itself; I saw the forward stoop of his body and his hurried gait. The first and second fingers were thrust forward by themselves as though with the intention of ramming my feelings, words and thought into the very soul of the man I was talking to" (translated by Magarshack 1961: 118). What is assumed is that natural physical behavior will follow genuine emotional concentration in an organic merging of character and actor. An emotional response leads the body. In the case of my own training, concomitant with this strong emphasis on the willful forgetting of my actor's body, I was being trained in Asian martial arts (*taijiquan* and *kalaripayattu*, see Zarrilli Chapter 15) that demanded my integrated awareness of physical and mental presence in relation to others and to the surrounding space. This synthesized mind/body/space training became crucial for me as I tried to imagine a way of being focused as performer without losing sight of the other conditions of production.

When taught and/or used exclusively, the organic approach can lead performers and audiences to skip over details and differences offered in various texts. Even in

its attempt to discover and exalt the playwright's ruling ideal, such an approach may tend to force deviations from straightforward realism/naturalism back into its own terms by seeking to justify seemingly unconventional choices through the conventional explanations offered by psychological paradigms. Viewed as an objective tool, the layers of meaning produced by the organic approach are ignored. The differences between the dominant culture's beliefs at the time of production and resistant or alternative perspectives, as well as historic and cultural differences, are often erased by organic acting. Hagen supports this masking of difference as an approach to acting:

Historic distances fade, seemingly fictional facts become a reality if one is as lucky as I was at the age of nine to spend a summer in a medieval castle on the Rhine. The fantasies I experienced . . . allowed me to believe that I had lived for a short while in the Middle Ages. If you can't go abroad . . . you can still read biographies and histories. Read them until you know you've lived in those rooms with those people, eaten that particular food, slept in that strange bed behind those curtains; danced, jousted and tilted with the best of them. (Read *Walden* and you'll understand pollution.)

(Hagen 1973: 30)

Hagen's privileging of the actor's imaginary experiences in creating a character denies the actor's inability to escape ideological constructs. Her remarks about the usefulness of histories and biographies fail to recognize the ideological markings of these texts, and her assumptions of the reader's class status may be considered somewhat presumptuous.

Because generally white, heterosexual middle-class males' positions of power are protected by liberal humanism, women, ethnic and racial minorities, lesbians and gay men and members of the lower classes are relegated to the margins of representation, whether they are moving relative to its frames as actors, directors, designers or spectators. The experiences of the disenfranchised are rendered invisible when the privileged class's experiences are represented as "universal" and "true."

One of the problems a feminist actor trained fundamentally in the organic approach must confront, is that psychological identification with a character, in privileging the myth of the actor's ability to experience and evoke for the audience universal human emotions and attributes, perpetuates the masking of tension and distance between privileged and marginalized peoples. Processes by which dominant ideologies continuously reconstruct categories of otherness (related to race, gender, class, sexuality, etc.) and preserve ways of thinking about otherness as attempts to crystallize positions of authority, are obfuscated in the essentialism of organic acting taught as a system. By way of its reliance on Freudian precepts, the organic method encourages unquestioning obedience to dominant, normalized modes of thinking and doing. In her ground breaking book *Feminism and Theatre*, Sue-Ellen Case explains that

the psychological construction of a character using techniques adapted from Stanislavsky places the female actor within the range of systems that have oppressed her very representation on stage. The techniques for the inner construction of a character rely on Freudian principles, leading the female actor into the misogynist view of female sexuality.

(Case 1988: 122)

Should an actor feel herself to be a member of any number of marginalized groups, she must not reveal these alliances on stage. Instead, the actor in realism must swim into the center of the mainstream, never hinting that she generally runs along the banks observing or ignoring the flow. The actor may know better, but the character will never tell.

The promise of realistic representational frames is that they will present characters that seem to be behaving as any person might under specialized circumstances in real life. Actors employing organic techniques are required to justify a character's choices by defining their psychological objectives from moment to moment within a given scene. The objective is usually required to be connected to the immediate scene partner and is phrased by the actor working through the scene as the character's need for a response from the other. As a student utilizing this particular technique, I recognized a pattern in my objectives. In heterosexual relationships – the mainstay of conventional theatre regardless of genre – my female character's needs were dependent upon my male partner taking action. My character's desire, then, was to be desired by the male subject of the narrative, or to persuade him to act on my behalf. Case exposes the trap that I stumbled into:

Female characters, when they do have a complex psychological base, are usually frustrated and unfulfilled – like the Electra on whom their complex is based, they wait for the male to take the subject position of the action. Their desire is for him to act for their own fulfillment.

(Case 1988: 122)

In deciding upon an objective for my character (a way of writing my own psychological score to play on stage), I privilege the author's intent. A good part of my work involves a hermeneutic study of the author's text. I try to discover the deeper truths at which the playwright may only hint, always focusing on what I believe the author's overarching message to be without judging, and in fact enthusiastically supporting, that message. As many playwrights working in conventional theatre espouse the dominant ideologies that may have afforded them the opportunity to have their work produced in mainstream venues, I am often faced with the dilemma of actively enacting my own and other women's oppression. Stanislavsky's devotion to the text has been held up as a model for students (as it was for me) and is evident in the following excerpt from Stanislavsky on the *Art of the Stage*:

It is, therefore, the duty of the actor to grasp the meaning of the ruling idea for the sake of which the author wrote his play. In addition he must make sure that the ruling idea appeals to him – both intellectually and emotionally. For the playwright's intentions will never be fully expressed by the actor if the ruling idea does not strike a chord in the heart of the actor himself.

(Stanislavsky in Magarshack 1961: 70)

Considering the demand of his approach, I find myself in complete agreement with Stanislavsky's position regarding the appeal of the ruling idea. I can take no "feminine" position within conventional theatre that strikes a chord in me except a resistant one. As a feminist seeking to deconstruct gender, my heart is not fully in my work, because any white, male-centered, heterosexist ruling idea is one expression of an oppressive ideology. "Feminine positions are produced as responses to the pleasures offered to us; our subjectivity and identity are formed in

the definitions of desire which encircle us . . . female desire is constantly lived by discourses which sustain male privileges” (Coward in Weedon 1987: 151).

Though the organic approach seeks to indoctrinate me into the discourses of patriarchal interests, I may be able to exploit it by clearly acknowledging its constructedness and revealing my oppositional stances in relation. Rather than completely subverting my identity to the character’s (which would assume fixed, knowable identities for each of us), thereby privileging the authority of the text, I can stand beside my character, at one moment acting for him or her, and at another commenting on his or her actions in a kind of hybrid Brechtian/Method technique.

As an “organic” actor, my emotional/psychological focus on stage has prevented me from conceiving a given production’s layers of meaning, because I am narrowly involved in only the meaning that I am producing. In fact, I am not supposed to be distracted in any way by the conditions of production, most especially the diverse group of spectators. Should my focus on my inner truths falter, I am instructed to build a more complex inner life for my character so that it will involve my attention completely. Contrary to Brecht, Hagen warns the actor to “avoid commenting on the play or the character or the circumstances or the symbols, or the message” (1973: 219). For Hagen, commenting is “bad acting” and complete psychological identification with the character is naturalized as “good acting” – believability within the terms of realism/naturalism, is all. “If, as the character, he [the actor] shows the audience how he wisecracks instead of proving his humor to the other character on stage, he is acting dishonestly” (218).

My task, then, as an adherent to the organic approach, is to transform into the character – to live her moment to moment reality on stage. I am not in a state of reflection during performance – I am reacting to my environment as my character. In this sense, I am not answerable for my character’s choices, and most especially not responsible for the author’s message to the audience. Hagen explains:

I can accept deliberate thinking only from a philosopher who organizes and arranges the otherwise chaotic and subjective processes of human thought into an objective viewpoint of life. He is taking himself out of the action – we actors are involved in it. To act is to do, not to think.

(Hagen 1973: 66–7).

While a misdirected focus certainly has the potential to stall an actor’s progression through any performance text, Hagen’s pedagogical cordoning off from the actor of abstract philosophical modes of thinking encourages uncritical obedience to ideas that may be politically problematic. There is perhaps no sharper feminist criticism of this traditional approach to acting than Hagen’s own directive to the acting student to shut off her mind.

The fact that “the lighting, setting, costumes, blocking, text – all the material aspects of theatre – are manipulated so that the performance’s meanings are intelligible to a particular spectator, constructed in a particular way by the terms of its address,” (Dolan 1988: 1) is not encompassed by my awareness as I “live my character’s life” on stage. In other words, I must mask my own awareness or build an inner monologue to distract that awareness from the theatrical apparatus that frames me. This leaves the meanings produced by the organic actor, especially one occupying the feminine position in conventional linear narrative, vulnerable to distortion.

Additionally, this narrow focus, in which an emotional response is privileged over a critical one, allows me to relinquish responsibility for any meaning I am generating. My entire process is mystified as a "spiritual" experience. Hagen tells me to empty myself like a vessel so that I can fill myself with the character. My organic process allows no room for social/political analysis. In many if not most cases, I must accept an expression of ideological constructs which negatively impact material conditions for women.

A Brechtian acting technique, on the other hand, would demand my presence as a performer alongside my character's presence. I would be required to think about what my character was doing and to communicate those thoughts to the spectators.

In the remainder of this essay, I will describe one example of my process as a feminist performer attempting to challenge the boundaries of conventional theatre in a university production of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* in which I played the role of Gwendolyn. In this production, I tried to formulate a unique acting technique, one specifically created for this production at this time under these circumstances. I mixed and matched what I had learned about acting: using the psychological techniques from my training to manipulate my emotional responses, a heightened awareness of my physicality as a producer of signs gained through the practice of Asian martial arts, along with Brechtian-inflected techniques that allowed me to maintain and express a critical distance from my character. My *Earnest* task, then, was to find a non-organic approach, a way of stepping outside of character and resisting the representational frame without completely disrupting the production.

Wilde's most famous play is not a realist text. Its full, original title, *The Importance of Being Earnest: A Trivial Comedy for Serious People*, suggests Wilde's critique of Victorian social practices and undercuts his own authority as a serious playwright. In order to mock the oppressive mores of his time, Wilde constructed a parody, and parody demands a flamboyant acting style that need not be rooted in psychological paradigms. Wilde's biographer, Richard Ellman, explains that

In "The Soul of Man Under Socialism," Wilde had repudiated marriage, the family, and private property; in his play, he repudiated them by pretending to care ineradicably, urging their enforcement with a mad insistence which shows how preposterous they are . . . Wilde made art into a new kind of ethic, replacing worn-out conventions with new generosity, freedom and individuality.

(Ellman 1988: 42)

As a feminist, I find Wilde's particular brand of satire politically incisive. The issues he raises for examination have been of historical concern to feminists, "marriage, family, private property," especially as they relate to one another and affect women's lives. The way in which Wilde manipulates language, overturning sternly held assumptions with the clever turn of a clichéd phrase such as Gwendolyn's, "If you are not too long, I will wait here for you all my life," catches the spectator off guard, forcing him/her to reconsider some aspect of cultural practice and belief that once seemed so natural as to be taken for granted. The unfamiliar language within the familiar demands that one hear the statement differently.

The characters in *Earnest* signify types in Wilde's fictionalized Victorian English society. Wilde draws them broadly to call attention to their posturings under the rubric of "Propriety." I chose to play Gwendolyn as a larger-than-life, two

dimensional figure to reinforce Wilde's intentions as well as my own political ones. In this instance, the author and I seemed to walk some common philosophical ground, and I felt comfortable in my interpretation of his words, without being compelled to resist his authority through my speaking of them. However, the production style was, in my opinion, resisting Wilde's intentions by allowing "organic," psychologically-based principles to inform its meanings.

An "organic approach" was privileged, not because the director asked for analyses of the characters' psyches, rather it has been so deeply embedded in many actor training programs that it stifles most of our attempts as actors to execute broad acting choices or to camp things up on stage. Our organic training tells us that we should develop all characters by relying on our essential humanity, emphasizing that we can be stylized without being unreal. Again, believability within naturalist/realist constructs is all. We are taught to search for the psychological justification of our characters' choices so that the spectator can identify with our emotions and actions. This attempts to organize the audience's morality as it re-organizes our own in a kind of circular reaffirmation of naturalized value systems. The drive toward so called "universal truths" diminishes heightened forms as actors are trained away from the manipulation of signs that point to their own artifice.

Realist confinements of stage reality are much less suitable for playing Wilde, in my estimation, than the possibilities for playfully broad expression offered by the esthetic of camp. Camp has been most markedly recognizable and indeed sired and nurtured in contemporary male homosexual drag shows. In her article, "Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic," Sue-Ellen Case proposes camp as a feminist performance strategy and recognizes Oscar Wilde as one of its pioneers:

Michael Bronski describes the work of late nineteenth-century authors such as Oscar Wilde in creating the homosexual camp liberation from the rule of naturalism, or realism. Within his argument, Bronski describes naturalism and realism as strategies that tried to save fiction from the accusation of daydream, imagination, or masturbation and to affix a utilitarian goal to literary production – that of teaching morals . . . Oscar Wilde brought . . . artifice, wit, irony and the distancing of straight [heterosexual, conventional] reality and its conventions to the stage.

(Case 1990: 287)

Wilde's use of "artifice, wit and irony" allowed him to critique the circulating ideologies that prohibited free human agency in his own nineteenth-century England. By over-emphasizing these values, Wilde made their constructedness visible. No longer are they absolute beliefs to which we must all adhere without question; now they become readable markers of rigid intolerance.

Using the organic approach, the actor would become the character existing within the social restrictions of her day, thereby evoking the style of production. In camp performance, the character and performer are both present on stage, creating a unique tension that opens spaces for critique not only by the performer, but by the individual spectator. Homosexual drag shows put gender on display and assumptions about natural behavior for men and women are thrown into relief. I played Gwendolyn as a drag role, wearing her gender as I wore her oversized hats, as something exaggerated that garnered attention. As I traveled through the performance text I attempted to play against conventional interpretations of

Gwendolyn and to reveal the construction of her gender. I felt that a conventional reading would trap Gwendolyn in misogynist ideologies, representing her as the object of John Worthing's desire. But by playing Gwendolyn as my image of a stereotypical romantic heroine, her gender could be magnified and revealed as artifice. As Dolan asserts, "the drag role requires the performer to quote the accepted conventions of gender behavior. A woman playing . . . the traditional representation of woman is quoting gender ideology, holding it up for critique, the performer makes gender available for discussion" (1988: 116).

The multi-layered bind for feminist actors in realism, and my bind in this and many other productions, was that I had to work to resist a conventional reading through a method of acting that insists on the revelatory truth of dominant discourses, especially psychology. As I mentioned earlier, psychology is presented to actors as a neutral tool for characterization. But psychological paradigms are not neutral; they are fathered by men such as Freud, Jung, and Lacan whose male biases have been effectively deconstructed by many feminist theorists. For the feminist actor to employ these paradigms is problematic. Was there some way for me to use these potentially oppressive tools, which were the core of my training, against themselves? I tried to find one through my manipulation of subtext.

"Subtext" literally refers to the meanings below the text. Through shadings in inflection and gesture, the actor can impose almost any meaning on a given line. For instance, the line "I love you," can be delivered sincerely, or sarcastically to imply its opposite: "I hate you."

Many factors inform an actor's choice of "reading" for a line: author's intentions and director's interpretation are generally privileged. The author's intentions are referred to in part as the given circumstances of the play to make them more practical for the actor. They encompass factors ranging from the time of day at which the action takes place, to a character's age, to the "fact" that certain characters are in love. Anything the author gives the actor as the character's "circumstances" must be accepted at the outset according to the organic approach. This is fundamentally, however, an interpretive project on the actor's part which in turn is conventionally heavily influenced by the director's own interpretation of the text. Additionally, though it may be my belief that Wilde intended his characters to be played artificially, the organic approach would demand conformation to a particular aesthetic sensibility understood as believability. Hence, what is categorized as believable is also considered to be a representation of what is "natural" and is appropriate for the sustenance of hegemonic thinking, behaving, imagining and reaffirming. In the late twentieth-century at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, we might have felt that we had the historic, geographic and cultural distance to critique Wilde's Victorian England along with him, but our own assumptions about what a Woman is remained unexamined and Wilde's own critique was diffused.

When an actor manipulates subtext she gives the audience clues about the character's intentions which are not completely revealed by the surfaces of the words of the text. Those moments in *Earnest* when the greatest tension existed between conventional notions of "womanhood" and my subtextual choices were perhaps most clearly resistant to naturalized, reiterative readings. For instance, whenever Gwendolyn proclaimed her love for John, she did so under the guise of "The Romantic Heroine," which stood in contrast to John's more genuine and rather

desperate platitudes. I made no attempts to render Gwendolyn's love for John believable, for her investment was in playing the game of love, not in sincere emotion.

While I was able to manipulate some specific subtextual choices, other aspects of the production were producing meaning around me. I tried to be aware of these competing semiotic agents during my performance so that I might disrupt their transmission. As Case warns:

Social conventions about the female gender will be encoded in all signs for women. Inscribed in body language, signs of gender can determine the blocking of a scene, by assigning bolder movements to the men and more restricted movements to the women, or by creating poses and positions that exploit the role of women as sexual objects. Stage movement replicates the proxemics of the social order, capitalizing upon the spatial relationships in the culture at large between women and the sites of power.

(Case 1988: 117–18)

My blocking in Act I was a good illustration of Case's argument. In this act, Gwendolyn and her mother, Lady Bracknell, visit her cousin, Algernon. There, Gwendolyn encounters John Worthing, the object of her desire. As I played her, Gwendolyn's attraction to John (using Ernest as a pseudonym) is devoid of emotional consequence. Wilde implies this reading in Gwendolyn's opening speech, but our conventional ideas about women and their appropriate behavior pressure contemporary female actors to make Gwendolyn sound sincere. The text reads as follows:

We live, as I hope you know, Mr. Worthing, in an age of ideals. The fact is constantly mentioned in the more expensive monthly magazines and has reached the provincial pulpits, I am told – and my ideal has always been to love someone of the name of Ernest. There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence. The moment Algernon first mentioned to me that he had a friend called Ernest, I knew I was destined to love you.

(Wilde 1979: 264)

If an actor were to justify this text, privileging sincere love as Gwendolyn's motivation, he might easily be read as "dizzy."

A conventional portrayal of Gwendolyn demands that she be perceived as the willing object of John's desire. Acting students are reminded that to make comic characters believable, the character must not be aware that they are funny. But the Gwendolyn that I played was not in love with John, nor was she empty-headed, and she was fully aware of her own outrageous manipulation of language, thereby thwarting conventional expectations of "natural" gender behavior. Her fascination was with an artificial idea of love, not with Mr. Worthing.

As an example of how women in representation are presented as objects, in this scene I was blocked by the director to stand very near the audience during the monologue I mentioned earlier. The actor playing John was placed behind me on the opposite end of the stage. From the spectator's viewpoint, the male character took possession of the female character through his gaze.

To play the scene "believably," I would have to turn my body to face John, with my back to the audience.² This would reinforce the illusion that the stage

representations were real life events, and would also reinforce John's position as subject and Gwendolyn's as object. Of course, I had other readings in mind. It seemed to me that if Gwendolyn turned to address the audience and take them into her awareness as a group of confidantes, she could resist objectification by breaking the exchange of gazes between the male protagonist and the spectators. She could have the opportunity to draw the spectators into her point of view rather than allowing them the more familiar identification with the male protagonist. I presented the text to the audience, showing them Gwendolyn's delight in her masquerade as the Romantic Heroine and inviting them to take pleasure in this performance along with her (Figure 22.1).

Knowing that a series of impressions strung together in a performance must be read very quickly by the spectator, I understand that the visual impact of any given moment is extremely potent. As an actor, while I can infiltrate the overall image, I cannot claim complete control over meanings being sent to the audience. Through manipulation of the focal point in composition, directors – and to some extent



Fig. 22.1 Lauren Love as Gwendolyn Fairfax in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, University of Wisconsin-Madison Theatre 1989.

designers – determine subject/object relationships between characters. When placed in the point of visual focus, a character is granted authority by the director. Because they are most often the subjects of representation, men usually occupy this position on stage.

Since I was unable to claim authority for Gwendolyn as a speaking subject because of my subservient position on stage as I was directed, I tried to undermine John's authority by trivializing his sincere desire for Gwendolyn. I chose to disengage Gwendolyn's emotional responses from her relationship with John; his declaration of romantic love had no power to possess her. Indeed, it did not interest her nearly as much as the erotic fantasies she created for her own pleasure. Gwendolyn was prepared to pursue the path toward her own sexualized self-actualization regardless of John's feelings.

I maintain that my acting choices, while they were designed to thwart conventional expectations, could be supported by Wilde's text, given his own intentions to disrupt discourses of appropriate social behavior. It is reported that Wilde told a friend that the philosophy of his play was that "we should treat all trivial things very seriously, and all the serious things of life with sincere and studied triviality" (Ellman 1988: 422). As I interpreted her, Gwendolyn was in full agreement.

I had learned to manipulate my emotional responses through my training in realistic techniques. It followed that if I could turn various emotional responses "on," I could also turn them off. For example, when Gwendolyn returns to the scene in Act I just after her mother has rejected her engagement with John, she says:

Ernest, we may never be married. From the expression on Mamma's face I fear we never shall . . . But although she may prevent us from becoming man and wife, and I may marry someone else, and marry often, nothing that she can possibly do can alter my eternal devotion to you.

For Gwendolyn's "super" or overall objective, I chose a desire for sexual experimentation, rather than the more conventionally appropriate desire to be provided for by a man through marriage. This idea colored my interpretation of the above speech, and I employed it to help me to make interpretive choices throughout the production. The concept of the "superobjective" is based in realistic acting technique, and by choosing an unconventional one for Gwendolyn I could raid what was most useful in my training for a feminist deconstruction of gender in performance. Her sexual appetite, then, became Gwendolyn's driving force – all of her actions emanated from this desire.

By playing the aforementioned scene with John as Gwendolyn's idea of the Romantic Heroine, I was also able to justify the distancing of believability through psychological acting techniques. For it was Gwendolyn, the character, who chose to achieve her objectives by playing a role herself. Neither Gwendolyn nor I as the actor playing her identified with the Romantic Heroine figure; rather, the image was displayed to the other people on stage as a tactic for Gwendolyn to provoke the responses she desired from them. Gwendolyn's emotional responses were put on for effect; her needs were not dependent upon John's desire. She was only playing at love, but John was seriously smitten. Gwendolyn's ideas about "eternal devotion" were tied to her role playing, but her deeper needs were much more carnal – she was very serious about multiple marriages.

I used Gwendolyn's inflated sense of her own presence to justify psychologically an exaggerated acting style throughout the production. In the famous tea scene in Act II between Gwendolyn and Cecily, the two ingenues, I exaggerated my facial expressions and vocal and gestural inflections to resist a realistic reading of Gwendolyn. I did exactly what Uta Hagen warns actors not to do – I commented on the circumstances and showed the audience the character's reactions.

Gwendolyn has come to see John at his country estate. When she discovers his absence, she confronts his young ward, Cecily Cardew. Both women believe they are engaged to the same man because John and Algernon have each used "Ernest" as an alias, and a typical heterosexual rivalry is born.

When the women have tea, I chose to privilege Gwendolyn's fear of losing face socially over "winning the man" as her objective. Again, I attempted to ground my choices to parody notions of femininity within the character's psychological need to present herself as a popular cultural type – the romantic heroine made so familiar to her in pulp novels etc. The more conventional motivation for Gwendolyn's growing discomfort in this scene would emerge from her emotional attachment to John, but my choice was rooted in maintaining the composure of the heroine within the tenuous decorum of this environment. Whenever Cecily challenged Gwendolyn's false superiority, her mask of social pretension set more rigidly.

In the tea scene, Wilde has written an aside for Gwendolyn which can be delivered directly to the audience. While Cecily is serving her, Gwendolyn turns and breaks the fourth wall by saying, "Detestable girl! But I require tea!" (Wilde 1979: 293). I followed this moment of Gwendolyn's confidence with the audience with one my own as a performer, communicating through facial expression my disapproval of my character's behavior. By raising my eyebrows and tilting my head as I turned back into the scene, I tried to convey my distaste for the entire masquerade. My approach to this moment, among others, can be described as somewhat Brechtian because, "rather than being psychologically enmeshed with the character, as the performer is in Stanislavsky's technique . . . the [Brechtian] performer continually stands beside the character, illustrating its behavior for the spectator's inspection" (Dolan 1988: 114).

By broadening the field of my awareness on stage to include the audience as another character, I tried to create many moments which could be read as direct communication with the spectators. For example, in the third and final act, Lady Bracknell has once more refused to consent to Gwendolyn's engagement to John. John has suggested that if Lady Bracknell grants her consent to his marriage to Gwendolyn, he will allow his ward, Cecily, to marry Lady Bracknell's nephew, Algernon. Lady Bracknell flatly refuses the deal, to which John responds, "Then a passionate celibacy is all that any of us can look forward to" (Wilde 1979: 308). Gwendolyn's reaction was one of shock and dismay – the prospect of a life of celibacy is unbearable to her; I tried to show the audience her reaction by making it bigger than organic, believable acting would allow by literally gaping at the idea and turning to share the moment with the audience.

These are some examples of the ways in which I tried to add to and mix up the bag of meanings being presented to the audience. Whether or not the spectators questioned their assumptions about gender or representation is unknown to me and highly doubtful. Perhaps, within the frames of conventional theatre, all the feminist performer can offer is a place of resistance which puzzles the spectators by

thwarting their expectations. It is unfortunate that economic exigencies may force feminists who are also actors to confront the constraints imposed by conventional theatrical practices in order to make a living as an artist. However, it may also be true, that by calling attention to normalized beliefs and practices in the moments during which they are unfolding and repeating, by making the familiar strange, some members of the audience may begin to question certain assumptions.

Perhaps the feminist actor, to be fully expressive, must work together with feminist directors, actors and designers. Until such opportunities become more widely available, however, by stepping in and out of character, behind and through the fourth wall, and against constructions of gender, the feminist performer within conventional theatre might begin to name and resist oppressive discourses.

23

RACHEL ROSENTHAL CREATING HER SELVES

Eelka Lampe

In theatre you mostly work from or with a text, in performance you squeeze out yourself, you dredge it up from your unconscious. It is a process of giving it a form from the inner to the outer. The process cannot be frivolous, but must be deep, a deep commitment to yourself. It can be really transformational. Start from scratch. [. . .] Take risks, psychologically and physically. Generate your own stuff. Think of everything you do as if it is the only chance in life that you have to do it: now, here, in a particular way. You will never have the chance again.

(Rachel Rosenthal 1985c)

A bald woman with long, black gloves, wearing a fluttery gray-green silk tunic, raps, chants, sings, and screams to the sound of an amplified violin. The diversified audience at the Central Park band shell in New York City is transfixed as she rages about loneliness, eating habits, damaged knees, her mother haunting her, and growing up forced to perform in the high-class Paris environment of the 1930s. But gradually she transcends her personal pain and moves on to global concerns. She speaks up for human and animal rights and takes full responsibility for the damage civilization has done to the world. “I am guilty of being alive. Through being alive I have tacitly agreed to [. . .] the obscenity of the food chain, of the carnage of the earth, of the malicious plays of survival, of the obscene exploitation of the weak, of the obscenity of agriculture, of husbandry, of butchery, of marketing, of fascism, of medicine, of laboratory animals, of obscene experimentation” (Rosenthal 1981).

I am witness to the performing power of Rachel Rosenthal, who wants to reach out with her work beyond the narrow boundaries of the art community. After the performance on 31 July 1987 I hear a young man, who was obviously strongly affected by her performance, asking her, “Where does this come from?” Rosenthal laughs: “Where does it come from? . . . from 60 years of life.”

A LIFE HISTORY

In interviews, Rosenthal gave me a more complete picture of her artistic background. Rachel Rosenthal became a performance artist in 1975. Before that, her varied career spanned theatre, dance, and the visual arts. Born in 1926, she was raised in Paris until her family fled the Nazis to Brazil in 1940. One year later they moved to New York City where she attended the High School of Music and Art.

After the war, from 1947 to 1955, Rosenthal went back and forth between Paris and New York. During these years she studied acting at the Jean-Louis Barrault School of Theatre and with Herbert Berghoff. She apprenticed with director Erwin Piscator and then directed several off Broadway productions on her own. She served as assistant designer to Heinz CondeU at the New York City Opera, and worked as a painter, sculptor, and engraver.

In addition, Rosenthal danced in Merce Cunningham's young company and became close friends with John Cage, Remy Charlip, Robert Rauschenberg, and Jasper Johns. Cage introduced her to Zen Buddhism and Asian philosophy and she started training in various Asian martial arts (karate, kung fu, *taijiquan*) which she continued practicing until the mid-1960s. In 1955 she was asked to teach acting for the Living Theatre, then located in the living room of Judith Malina and Julian Beck. She refused because she was just beginning to find her "own way" (Rosenthal 1985a). Instead she moved to Los Angeles where she taught acting and dance at the Pasadena Playhouse. In 1956 Rosenthal founded Instant Theatre, an improvisational group influenced by the esthetics of Antonin Artaud and Cage. She married King Moody, an actor in the group who later became the clown Ronald McDonald. Instant Theatre disbanded in 1966 and Rosenthal went back to painting and sculpting while living a "housewife's life" in an affluent suburb of Los Angeles. Her marriage was childless and ended in divorce in the late 1970s.

In 1971 Rosenthal's life was radically altered when she was introduced to feminism and feminist art at a conference of women artists at the California Institute of the Arts. Because she had been taught a history of art that considered only the contribution of male artists, and because she thought of herself as an artist, she identified with men. "Then I came to this conference, and I saw slides of extraordinary work. [. . .] And for the first time in my life, I began to shift my identification, and began to see that I could be an artist and be a woman" (Rosenthal 1985a).

Two years later, Rosenthal became involved with Womanspace, a Los Angeles based group that established and ran feminist art galleries. She then started to experiment with performance. The feminist credo guiding her work was, "the personal is the political." Between 1975 and 1981, she "exorcised" personal obsessions and disturbances. According to Rosenthal: she overcame a chronic knee condition in the healing ceremony of *Replays* (1975); in *Charm* (1977), she worked out traumatic memories of her elite but repressed Parisian childhood; she reflected on her relationship with her half-sister in *The Head of O.K.* (1977); and, in *Bonsoir, Dr Schon!* (1980), she displayed three different aspects of herself – vulnerable, powerful, beloved – and integrated them into one "powerflowing" life (Rosenthal 1980: 90). The theme of each work was Rosenthal's own death and rebirth. This approach reached its apex in *The Death Show* (1978) and *Leave Her in Naxos* (1981). In *The Death Show*, she sought to overcome her fear of letting past phases of her life "die" (Rosenthal 1979: 45). *Leave Her in Naxos* revealed intimate

details of Rosenthal's love life in interview form and, close to the end of the piece, a performer shaved off all of Rosenthal's hair. This action was an offering of "her femininity, her beautiful red hair, in a 'ritual of dying to allow for rebirth'" (Christensen 1983: 10).

With *Soldier of Fortune* (1981) and *Taboo Subjects* (1981), Rosenthal went through a transitional phase, reflecting on the genre of performance art and her own work in relation to it. *Traps* (1982) was the first performance in which she moved clearly toward an integration of personal and social concerns. By this time Rosenthal was afraid that she had "used up my material, my life. [. . .] I would have to move forward or die" (Apple 1983: 13). By 1983 her interest had shifted toward making "a passionate plea for the fate of the Earth and a new consciousness" (Apple 1983: 13). *Gaia, Mon Amour* (1983), *KabbaLaMobile* (1984, on the car as cultural icon), *The Others* (1985, on animal rights), *Was Black* (1986, on Chernobyl), *L.O.W. in Gala* (1986), and *Rachel's Brain* (1987), all focus on social and political issues.

But even these recent pieces refer societal issues to personal experience.

My concern about broader issues, the state of the world, starts, of course, from my very personal self. Who are you and what you make cannot be separated. There is a continuum between life and art. We make up artificial borderlines trying to imprison phenomena into certain categories.

(Rosenthal 1984a)

For the sake of analysis I divide Rosenthal's performance work into three constituents: (1) the performance sequence of training, workshop, rehearsal, warm-up, performance, cool-down, and aftermath (Schechner 1985: 16–21); (2) the macrostructure of the overall organization of a piece; and (3) the microstructure of her performance technique.

PERFORMANCE SEQUENCE

For a performance artist, Rosenthal is unusually equipped with a solid background in theatrical training. Her work is rooted in the Western theatrical tradition which holds that actors can draw on different performing techniques according to circumstance and individual need. Over the years, Rosenthal's own training has ranged from Stanislavskian techniques to Zen meditation. However, because of her personal preference for stylization – heavily influenced by Barrault – she modifies these techniques by informing her body movement with the underlying principles of Asian martial arts. The result is a performance vocabulary that can be described as "indirectly codified."

The longest and most intense segment of her creation process is the workshop phase. She describes workshop as a time of gathering and exploring material before deciding upon the final shape of the piece.

When I work on something, it's a little bit like gardening: you prepare the soil and feed it and you turn it over, and this all takes a long time. Then you put down the seed and wait and see what happens. I do a lot of research, I do a lot of reading, and I do a lot of fooling around in the areas that I think the piece will be about. Then I leave it alone and go into a kind of semi-unconscious state and it begins to happen.

(Rosenthal 1985a)

The more a performance explores the self – as in Rosenthal’s autobiographical phase, which often resulted in a once-only performance – the less she rehearses. Accordingly, more of the raw “workshop” quality gets carried into the actual performance, a very typical feature of the original conception of performance art. The less “exorcising of the self” there is, the more rehearsing is needed, for what is being prepared is a repeatable theatrical production.

Since *Gaia* I have been rehearsing a little bit more, because it involves other people. I have been obliged to rehearse. [But] I still come pretty unformed to the performance and the performance kind of jells it. But, I find that since I’m doing pieces that I’m repeating a lot, I probably have to rehearse them more. The more I do them the better I do them and I don’t want to wait until I have done them many times to get a real handle on them. So I may have to change and start thinking about rehearsing.

(Rosenthal 1985a)

For Rosenthal, each performance serves as a rehearsal for the next, merging these two phases of the performance sequence. This way of working is not solely due to the performance art context:

It was influenced by my [work with] Instant Theatre, by my need for improvisation, by my trust that it would happen in front of the audience. A lot of it had to do with my trust that I can come on and do my “song and dance.”

(Rosenthal 1985a)

Despite moving closer to ordinary theatre practices, she still retains a feature typical of performance art, particularly women’s performance art: the use of ritual. Rosenthal is ritualistic in her handling of the warm-up, the phase immediately before the performance. Usually Rosenthal paces while enacting her own rituals: lighting incense, rattling a gourd, “sending energy through the gourd or sometimes even with my drum into my performance space, the space used by my musicians, if any, and also the audience’s space. I usually have a candle lit in the center of the stage. And then I do some breathing and vocalizing, and sometimes when I have problems with a difficult text I quickly go over the beginning” (Rosenthal 1985a).

After the performance, Rosenthal frequently engages in an audience response session. She has dinner with friends and then goes home.

The aftermath, which can extend for weeks or even years after a performance, is the final phase of the performance sequence. Rosenthal acknowledges that she cannot be sure what will develop as an aftermath. She reports that it is not uncommon for spectators to approach her a long time after a performance and tell her how they were affected by it (Rosenthal 1985b).

MACROSTRUCTURE

The term “macrostructure” refers to the large network within which the performance takes place, the frame that shapes the content of a piece, and within which the performance techniques are nourished and/or restricted. Shaped by two main influences – orthodox Western theatre and Happenings, particularly John Cage – Rosenthal’s performances are multifaceted structures within which many sources simultaneously converge.

MICROSTRUCTURE

When asked to distinguish between acting and other forms of performing, Rosenthal responded: “I don’t see a difference between performing myself, or a character, or a ritual” (1984a). This concisely expresses a shift of consciousness in the performance world of the United States and Europe since the 1960s. The artistic rebellion against traditional Euro-American acting techniques led performance theorist Michael Kirby to develop his acting/not-acting model (Chapter 4). Kirby defines acting as pretense or mimesis, an idea traceable to Aristotle and spanning 2,500 years of Western culture. Kirby’s model helps theorists to determine if a performer is playing a character, or is “just” her/himself. It is a device for measuring the degree of imitation used in performing. Although intended to analyze performance forms that do not use “acting,” Kirby’s model does not question the premise of mimesis which continues to be the base line.

Rosenthal goes beyond mimesis. She performs a “total act” (see Grotowski 1968: 125). Although her pieces are multimedia events, it is her commitment of body, voice, and soul that makes her work succeed. Describing her performing, Rosenthal says, “With skill I do not mean to simulate but to heighten” (1984a). In Eugenio Barba’s words, she strives for an “extra-daily technique” of performing parallel to an Asian performer’s manifestation of presence and energy. Barba believes that actors in noncodified Occidental genres are “prisoner[s] of arbitrariness and an absence of rules” (1986b: 136). But Rosenthal is one of those who has bridged the gap between Asian (codified) and Euro-American (uncodified) theatres. Her performing style is an individualistic, psychological approach informed by Asian martial arts and performing traditions (Rosenthal 1984b).

I was not trained in Asian theatre forms, but I had the chance to observe and learn from them (*kathakali*, *nō*, *kabuki*). I feel and have always felt very close to the Japanese culture; it is like being at home with it.

(Rosenthal 1984a)

Whenever she enters the extra-daily mode, Asian principles of performing govern her work. Those are: centering her energy below the navel; playing with the alteration of balance; opposing physical forces inside her body; and isolating, simplifying, and enlarging movements (see Barba 1986b: 153). In *Traps*, these techniques were evident in her performance of the monk and the warrior, the tranquil and aggressive versions of herself (Figure 23.1).

Most strikingly, she uses these extra-daily techniques to deconstruct Western representations of gender. She appropriates non-Western codified performance languages to create personae that, for Western audiences, come across as androgynous. The monk and the warrior personae are beings that exist outside the Western binary gender system. Rosenthal’s “persistent defiance of categorization, or role-playing as it has been genderized by our culture” (Forte 1985: 34) exemplifies her particular commitment to feminism.

Whenever Rosenthal uses gender clichés, she foregrounds them as cultural fabrications. In *Rachel’s Brain* her highly stylized version of Marie-Antoinette is a metaphor of Enlightenment (Figure 23.2). But Marie-Antoinette is also “woman,” a fashion object who in her body objectifies and represents “man’s” view of



Fig 23.1 Rachel Rosenthal as the warrior in *Traps* (1982). (Photo by Daniel J. Martinez.)

the world. In her parodistically exaggerated costume Rosenthal moves with utter control across the stage, fighting back the “natural instincts” surging up from Marie-Antoinette’s lower body. She sings, chants, and screams an eclectic text proclaiming the supremacy of thought over emotion.

But Rosenthal also has instances in her performances that are closer to psychological “acting.” When I asked her if she considered herself to be “acting” when she was stripped naked by other performers in *Bonsoir Dr Schon!*, and how this compared to the next moment of impersonating the character of Dr Schon, she responded: “It’s all me. I showed three fragments of myself: the nude me, easy to get hurt; the Dr Schon one, male and presentable; and the Rachel Rosenthal as I am socially received” (1984a). This is a skillful deployment of “performed selves,” each at a specific distance from her daily self; she plays with Rosenthal personae not usually visible in a daily context (Figure 23.3). These represent psychological qualities but cannot depict the full “message” or “narrative” of a Rosenthal piece. Others function as living metaphors, esthetic constructs presenting non-psychological beings, such as the monk in *Traps*, a post-nuclear holocaust creature in *L.O.W. in Gaia*, or Marie-Antoinette in *Rachel’s Brain*.

Rosenthal distinguishes between the creation of “character” and “persona” in relation to her own psyche:

In acting, or playing a character, you want to impersonate the personality of a person that is not yourself. A persona, however, is an artifact, a fabrication, that corresponds to what you want to project from yourself, from within. It is like taking a facet, a fragment, and using that as a seed to elaborate on. It is you and yet not you – a part of



Fig. 23.2 Rachel Rosenthal as Marie-Antoinette in *Rachel's Brain* (1987) at the L.A. Festival, Bradley Theatre (LTC), Los Angeles. (Photo by Jan Deen.)

you but not the whole. It is not a lie but neither the full truth. In *Traps*, for example, those were all personae. For instance, the warrior. I see myself as a warrior, a frustrated warrior. I am bellicose: somebody who wants to fight but has to sublimate that. A performance is the only place and time that I can be a fighter, can be aggressive.

(Rosenthal 1984b)

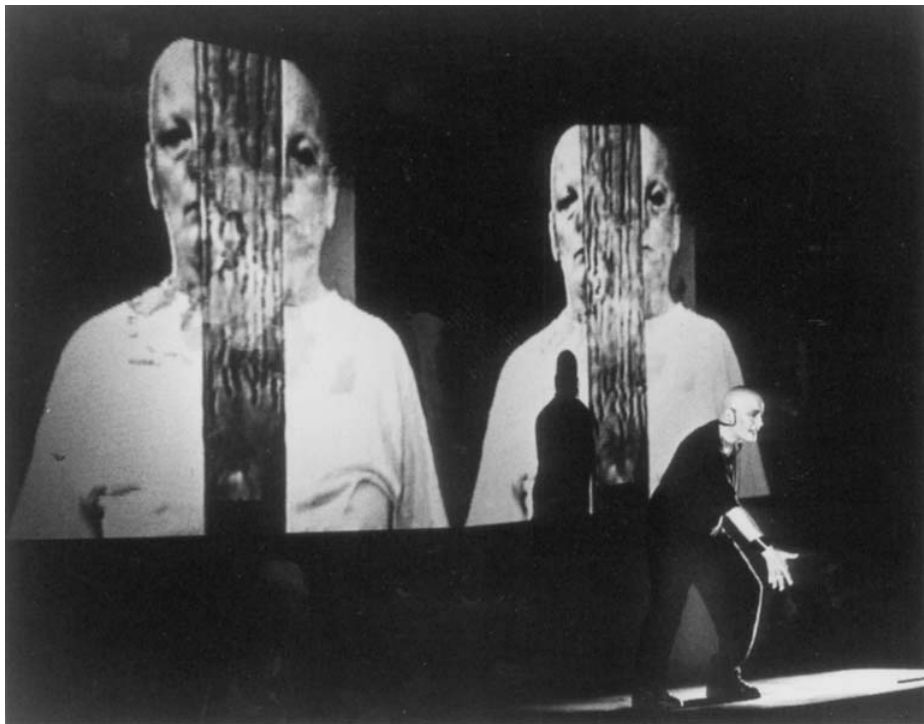


Fig. 23.3 Rachel Rosenthal explores her many-fold selves in *Pangaeon Dreams*. (Photo by Jan Deen.)

“Performing” encompasses more modes of social and esthetic behavior than “acting” ever could. “Acting” and “character” are linked to the Western notion of “narrative” and all three together are major building blocks of the apparatus of Western theatrical representation which inscribes the binary and hierarchical gender distinction of male and female. In contrast, “performing” and “persona” disrupt the working of conventional Western narrative and, as exemplified in *Traps*, allow for the co-logical expression of multiple selves. Through personae a woman can speak as a subject from the perspective of multiple selves, moving beyond the limiting object position of the female gender in theatrical representation.

The construction of character in the Western theatrical tradition can be explicated by an aspect of Richard Schechner’s “restoration of behavior” model (1985: 35–116). Schechner integrated D. W. Winnicott’s and Gregory Bateson’s ontogenesis of individuals, with Victor Turner’s social action of ritual, in order to develop a model of the “symbolic, even fictive, action of art” (1985: 113). Whether it is a child’s process of learning to distinguish between a “me” and a “not me,” or a person undergoing an initiation rite that transports her or him from one cultural status to another, or an actor rehearsing to become a “character,” the process employs a transitional phase during which a person suspends the security of just being “me” while not yet reaching a new state of the “not me.” Schechner defines the act of performing as a “double negative”:

While performing, he [the performer] no longer has a “me” but a “not me,” and this double negative relationship also shows how restored behavior is simultaneously

private and social. A person performing recovers his own self only by going out of himself and meeting the others – by entering a social field. The way in which “me” and “not me,” the performer and the thing to be performed, are transformed into “not me . . . not not me” is through the workshop-rehearsal/ritual process.

(Schechner 1985: 112)

In performance, artistic quality depends on how successfully performers maintain the tension or the dialectical balance between the actual and the fictive, the “me” and the “not me.” This concept of “restored behavior” is similar to Rosenthal’s explication of performing a persona: “It is you and yet not you – a part of you but not the whole” (1984b). But in Schechner’s model there is no difference between a performer who performs only an aspect of her/his self (persona) and the one who performs a complex being other than her/himself (character).

Put in personal terms, restored behavior is “me behaving as if I am someone else” or “as if I am ‘beside myself,’ or ‘not myself,’” as when in trance. But this “someone else” may also be “me in another state of feeling/being,” as if there were multiple “me’s” in each person.

(Schechner 1985: 37)

According to Schechner all these examples fall under the same principle of restored behavior, no matter how gradual the move away from the construction of “me.” Schechner has created a complex alternative to the traditional Aristotelian concept of mimesis and, in doing so, restoration of behavior is closer to Kirby’s ideas of “acting” and “not-acting” than to Barba’s ideas of extra-daily performing. However, Schechner goes far beyond the traditional realm of acting. Restoration of behavior draws from and expands into the social and ritual realms of performative behavior. In contrast to Schechner, I want to specify what distinguishes “acting” from various other types of performing.

Erving Goffman’s definition of performance in *Frame Analysis* is very useful here: “A performance [. . .] is that arrangement which transforms an individual into a stage performer, the latter, in turn, being an object that can be looked at in the round and at length without offense and looked to for engaging behavior, by persons in an ‘audience’ role” (1974: 124). The more exclusively an “audience” pays attention to a “performance,” the “purer” the performance in Goffman’s definition. Goffman created a continuum from the most to the least pure performances, that is, from staged ones like theatre or concerts, to sports events and personal ceremonies, to performing occupational roles in social contexts. Goffman employed the theatrical concept of performance as a model for the social realm; for both on stage and off, he distinguished between a person as an individual complex identity and the specialized function of a person in a social role. Performances can have layers of appearances and intentions which possibly contradict each other (see Goffman 1974: 125–8). In Rosenthal’s performances, not only the switching between performance modes, but also the layering of modes is important.

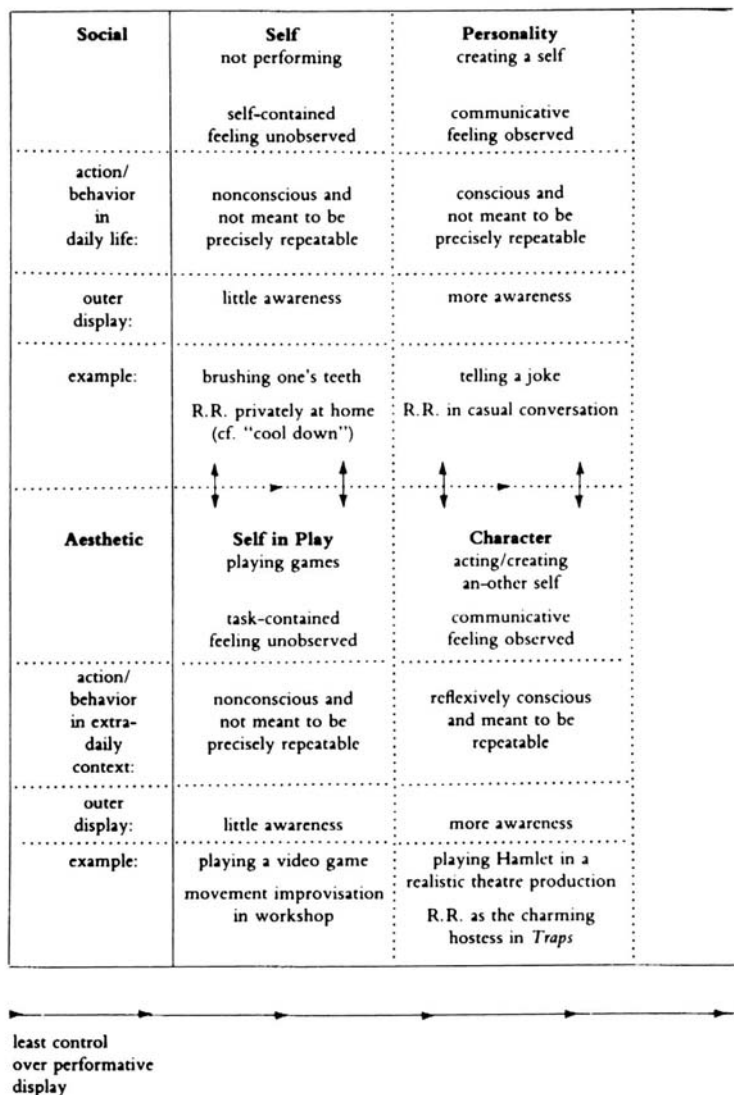
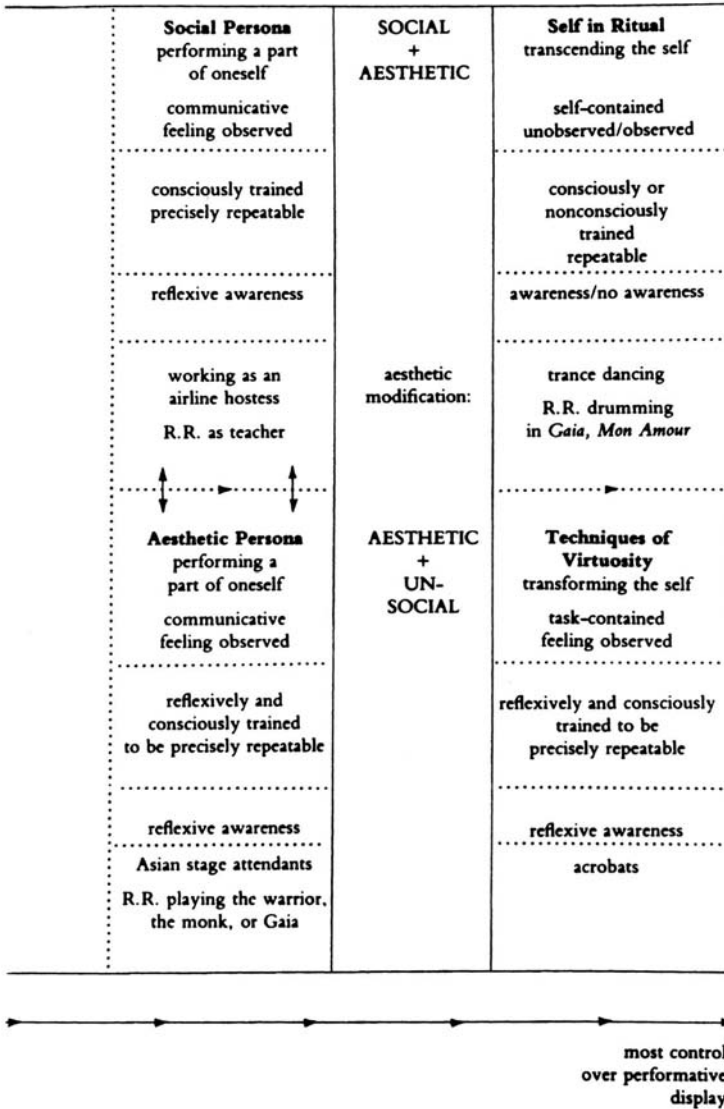


Fig. 23.4 A performing/not performing scale.

A MODEL OF PERFORMING/NOT-PERFORMING

I have combined the theories of Goffman, Schechner, Barba, and Kirby with my own findings about Rosenthal's work to develop a performing/not-performing scale (Figure 23.4). As a continuum my model features, from left to right, an increase in control over performative display. But this linear aspect is secondary to the model's major function: to illustrate a network of performance modes. In my model, I separate the social from the aesthetic while in fact the two are mutually permeable. In orthodox Western acting a performer constructing a character might



draw on aspects of her/his own self, personality, or various social personae. The reverse can also be true: a personality can be a fictional character of one's own construction. The same holds for the fabrication of a person's social personae. Both the social and the aesthetic personae can be built from very private aspects of the self. And, conversely, a person's social persona might be displayed while s/he is playing a self-absorbed game. Performing is a mixture and/or a layering of several of the model's "pure" stages. My categories "self in ritual" and "techniques of virtuosity" (Barba 1986b: 139) are separated from the main body of the performing network because they transform the person beyond the reach of both daily and extra-daily practices.

During her Spring 1985 NYU workshop, which I attended, Rosenthal performed an excerpt from *Gaia, Mon Amour*. As she prepared herself by walking through the space and reciting lines to herself, she seemed unaware of the onlookers. Appearing nonconscious of her behavior during this time, she was “not performing.” Twice she broke her concentration to address the workshop participants. The first time she suggested that we read particular books. The second time she explained *Gaia*’s sound score. Both times she undertook a conscious act of communication. Yet, these were not to be repeated; talking to the participants was a spontaneous expression of her personality. Rosenthal was aware of being observed, so she “created her self” in front of us. But since the context of her interaction with us was not private but framed by the workshop, her manner of talking and behaving represented her social persona as “teacher.” To be a teacher, she had consciously isolated certain qualities of her self. “Personality” and “social persona” are two ways of performing in a social context. Social persona draws on a higher degree of performance awareness than does personality. When Rosenthal played the “character” of the “charming hostess” in *Traps*, she drew on aspects of her social persona.

The category “self in play” was not part of Rosenthal’s *Gaia* demonstration but it is applicable to certain activities of the workshop. For example, she asked us to “do an action with your hands. Make it larger, abstract the action from its original intent. Let it affect your spine. Let it affect your whole body until you move in space. Relate your action to the person next to you” (Rosenthal 1985c). Focusing attention on the task I lost self-consciousness and “flowed” with the action (see Csikszentmihalyi 1975). The “self in play” is a nonconscious self.

My model’s next category, “character,” was partially detectable during Rosenthal’s *Gaia* demonstration. The protagonist, a bag-lady clown, is as Rosenthal said, a “kind of character.” She is not a fully developed personality, but by wearing a clown mask and sleeping among a pile of garbage some elements of character and place are suggested. Here is where Rosenthal’s specialty comes into play: within a single character two distinct personae – a clown and a bag lady – clash with each other. A third persona, represented by Rosenthal reciting in cabaret-style a sophisticated text on the subject of death, offsets the other two. Rosenthal dissociates three channels of expression – visual appearance, body language, and verbal text – using each to represent a different persona. Such an integration of diverse personae to a “kind of character” is very different from the psychologically and physically integrated characters of orthodox Western theatre.

This kind of fabrication leads to the final category within the realm of extra-daily techniques: the pure version of an “aesthetic persona.” Rosenthal’s highly stylized version of the goddess Gaia serves as a good example. Rooted in one spot Rosenthal orates in a deep and roaring voice as Mother Earth about her power for creation and destruction. Throughout this speech she moves through a series of postures that resemble stylized animal configurations which are typical of Asian martial arts. Instead of performing a character in the orthodox sense, Rosenthal isolates, enlarges, and interweaves distinct qualities of her vocal and physical instrument personifying self-made metaphors to create aesthetic personae, such as Gaia.

The “self in ritual” potentially exists in every sacred or secular ritual where participants may temporarily lose everyday self-awareness. This transcendence of the self can happen as a believer goes into trance during a Baptist church service

or as a Greenwich Villager joyfully dances in New York's Halloween street parade. Rosenthal uses ritualistic actions – intended to engage the community of spectators – such as strewing beans in *Traps*, or having spectators light sparklers in *My Brazil*, or drumming at the conclusion of *Gaia, Mon Amour*. But there are differences between what Rosenthal does and “ordinary” ritual. Ritual is frequently automatic, built into certain kinds of social behavior. Rosenthal creates ritual in the aesthetic realm. She is reflexively aware of the qualities and effects of her outer displays.

The last of my categories, “techniques of virtuosity,” is the equivalent on the aesthetic plane of the social “self in ritual.” Both are psychophysical ways of transcending or transforming the self beyond a daily and even extra-daily context of communication. “Techniques of virtuosity” – as used, for example, by acrobats – employ consciously trained behavior, and an awareness of outer display. In these aspects they resemble the category of “aesthetic persona.” But in contrast to “aesthetic persona” this kind of performance mode is primarily task-contained and not actively communicative. It goes beyond “aesthetic persona” because the performer (e.g., an acrobat) psychophysically transforms her/himself to a degree that breaks with the network of daily and extra-daily forms of communication (see Barba 1986b: 139). This element does not occur in Rosenthal's performance art.

PERFORMING AS COMMUNICATION

In conclusion, let me suggest a modification of Schechner's scheme of performing as a “double negative” (1985). Figures 23.5 and 23.6 – two depictions of the same process – are informed by Barba's findings in the realm of performance technique and Goffman's analysis of the social and aesthetic versions of the self.

Communication is not possible between a “pure me” (myself) and a “pure other” (self of another person). Communication is the fabrication of personae that make contact and interact with the other's multiple personae. Performing is a means to communication. Through personae a so-called individual can reveal a large or small part of the “me.” I have indicated this graphically by the proximity or distance of the “persona” to the “me” end of the linear model (Figure 23.5). In the circular version of the model (Figure 23.6), the different personae of the self are shown imbedded in the “created self,” which is the personality in life or the character on stage. A personality or character is a balanced bunch of personae located between the “not me” and the “not not me” poles of the model; the “not

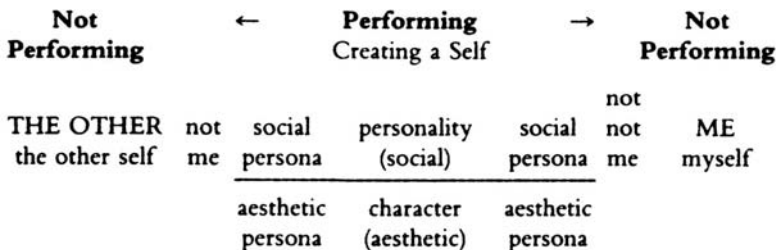


Fig. 23.5 A linear model of performing as communication.

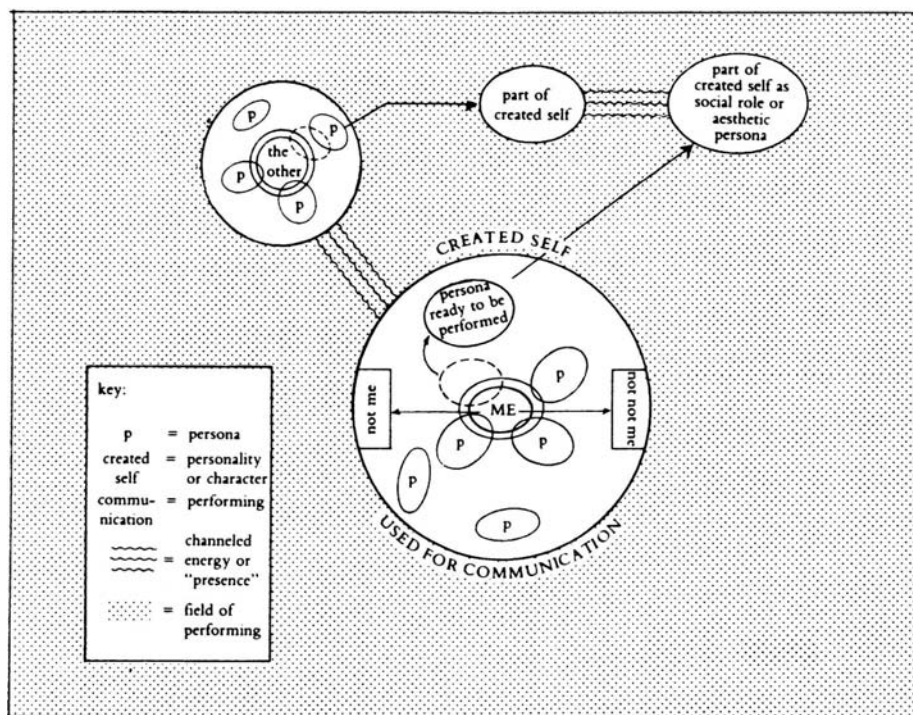


Fig. 23.6 A circular model of performing as communication. (Plate graphic by Stuart McFeely.)

me” and the “not not me” are in dynamic balance. Any particular social or aesthetic persona can be very close to the “not me” or to the “not not me” pole, or anywhere in between. These multiple constructions of the self are the created personae of a person’s daily life.

If this model is correct, then every small-scale interaction between human beings, that is, every act of interpersonal communication, is an act of performing. Only degree, intensity, and focus determine whether or not we speak of a private, intimate encounter, a social interaction, or an aesthetic performance. Each culture develops and establishes various frameworks that are mutually recognized by interactants as regulating various communicative encounters. When I asked Rosenthal how she would explain her occupation to me if I were a person from a non-Western culture, she responded:

I am an educator and an artist and my form is to put out works and to teach people to put out works that express concerns about themselves and the world and the universe in a way that is unorthodox, innovative, synthetic, and communicative.

(Rosenthal 1985a)

24

TASK AND VISION

Willem Dafoe in LSD

Philip Auslander

I'm this particular guy who has to go through these particular paces. It's not so much that I'm putting forward my personality, but because of the various actions I have to do, I'm presenting my personality in how I field those actions. That is the acting in it. I'm a guy given a character, a performing persona, and I'm going through these little structures and how I field them is how I live in this piece.

(Willem Dafoe)

Task and vision, vision in the form of a task.

(John Ashbery, "Years of Indiscretion")

A discussion of Willem Dafoe is inevitably a discussion of the Wooster Group, the performance collective of which he is a member and which has been the most important formative influence on his approach to acting/performing. Dafoe draws a distinction between these activities; his hesitation to make it categorical reflects the Group's multi-tracked, polysemic production style. The essential structural principle of its work is juxtaposition, often of extremely dissimilar elements (e.g., a reading of *Our Town* and a comedy routine in blackface in *Routes 1 & 9*). The performers refer to and practice a variety of performance modes and styles in each piece, ranging from realistic acting to task-based collage (*Point Judith*), from work on familiar texts to recreations of the Group's own processes and experiences. The Group's current (at time of writing) production, *LSD* (. . . *Just the High Points* . . .), is, amongst other things, a performance compendium which includes all of the interests just mentioned and restates images and concerns explored in previous pieces.

The baseline of the Group's work is a set of performance personae adopted by its members, roughly comparable to the "lines" in a Renaissance theatre troupe. These personae, while not fixed, recur from piece to piece and reflect to some extent the personalities and interactions of the collective's members.

These [pieces] are made specifically for us. In this configuration of people, we do tend to make characters, life characters and characters in the productions. If you want to get real blocky about it, Ron [Vawter] is tense, kind of officious; he's the guy who's the link to the structure, he stage-manages the thing, he pushes it along, he's got a hard edge. I serve the function of sometimes being the emotional thing. The man, *a man*.

Or, as Dafoe also puts it, Everyman.¹

The interaction of these personae has provided the Group with a theme which, with variations, has been explored in a number of productions. In the first section of *Point Judith*, a one-act play, Vawter's character mocked Dafoe's (younger) man, calling him "Dingus," questioning his sexual prowess. In *Hula*, Vawter portrayed the leader of a seedy hula dance team trying to keep his second banana (Dafoe) in step and in line. Dafoe, in turn, seemed to be competing with him for the attention of the third dancer, acted(?)/danced(?) by Kate Valk. The second section of LSD, a reading of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, finds Vawter's Reverend Parris incoherently accusing Dafoe's John Proctor of witchcraft. Variations on the thematics of older man/younger man, boss/subordinate, oppressive conformity/good-natured anarchy are interlaced with undertones of sexual competition whenever the two performers work together.

The choice of Dafoe to represent emotional man is itself a (successfully) eccentric one. In films, he has played a series of punks, villains, down-and-outers. "[Film people] tend to see me as pretty tough, but they do on the street as well. The way people treat me in life is they treat me like I'm gonna slug 'em if, you know . . ." Dafoe's stereotypically "tough" physiognomy plays against his emotional performance persona to create a blur: the actor who's perceived as tough on the street or in the context of film and its system of signs and icons is a leading man in Wooster Group performances because that is the function he fulfills in *that* context, relative to *those* other performers.

The Wooster Group's personae occupy an ambiguous territory, neither "non-matrixed" performing nor "characterization." This ambiguity was exemplified in *Hula* by the audience's uncertainty as to whether it was watching a group of New York avant-garde performers doing hula dances for reasons of their own or whether there was, in fact, a kind of scenario being played out. Dafoe smiled frequently and seemed genuinely to enjoy his dancing (by contrast with Vawter, whose main focus was on keeping the others in step). But who was smiling: Dafoe, enjoying the dance, or a dancer played by Dafoe, or both? There were characters, but so slightly delineated as to function almost as "subtext," but subtext for what? Dafoe observes that the characters were not formalized in any way; perhaps, as he suggests, what appeared in the performance to be a minimal, but nevertheless present, degree of characterization was simply "the baggage that comes along with having these particular people on stage" dancing together. The "characters" arose from the activity: the task and the specific performers engaged in it.

When we make a theatre piece, we kind of accommodate what [the performers] are good at or how they read. They have functions, so it's not like we treat each other as actors and there has to be this transformation. We just put what Ron brings to a text and formalize it: it definitely comes from Ron as we know him, as he presents himself to the world and then, of course, when you formalize it and it becomes public in a

performance, that ups the stakes a little bit. That's not to say Ron is just being himself, but you're taking those qualities that he has and you're kind of pumping them up and putting them in this structure.

The Wooster Group's process is self-referential and hermetic. Performances are structured around the performers and their personae, personae which are produced by the performers' confrontations with their material and with the act of performing. Dafoe: "I'm serving a structure I helped make and it helped make me in this public event."

The absence of transformation in Wooster Group performance, as compared with more traditional modes of acting, is important to Dafoe – he insists that the Group does not place the premium on believability demanded by realistic acting, with its implication that the actor is really experiencing the emotions he portrays. Referring to a section of *LSD* which he places glycerin in his eyes to s(t)imulate tears (a motif of many Wooster pieces), Dafoe states,

Once you show the audience you're putting it in, it takes the curse off of it. Then it takes away, "Oh, what a fabulous, virtuoso performer he is, oh, he's crying!" That's something I could do. But [using the drops] makes things vibrate a little more, because you get your cake and eat it, too. You see the picture of the crying man, you hear the text, you see the whole thing before you.

The Wooster Group would trade illusionism for a more profound ambiguity. The technical processes of acting are demystified, as by the glycerin, but the central issue of mediation, of what intervenes between performer and audience, is raised but left intentionally unanswered.

For Dafoe, performance is essentially a task, an activity: the persona he creates is the product of his own relation to the "paces" he puts himself through in the course of an evening. While unconscious of the audience, he is hyper-conscious of creating a public image. The multiple, divided consciousness produced by doing something with the knowledge that it is being observed, while simultaneously observing oneself doing it, yields a complex confrontation with self.

The more I perform, the more my relationship to the audience becomes totally abstract. Different performers, actors need different things. For example, Spalding [Gray] loves an audience. He *really feels* them out there. I don't. It's a totally internal thing. Even when [I] have a character, I'm always curious to see how I *read*, what people think I am, who I am, and then you lay the action on top of that so you're confronting yourself in these circumstances. It's open-ended. I'm not presenting anything; I'm feeling my way through. If you were acting something, if you were very conscious of acting a character, somewhere you would close it down, you'd present it. You'd finish it. In this stuff, you never know.

"Feeling his way through" the actions he has been assigned, the effects he knows he must produce, is the subject of Dafoe's performing. *LSD* is a layered production. In Part 1, the performers read from books; in Part 2, they "play" characters from *The Crucible*. Part 3 consists of a minutely accurate recreation of the Group's behavior while trying to rehearse Part 2 on acid. Even when playing a character, Dafoe perceives his internal process while performing only in terms of his consciousness of and relation to the performance context. He makes no distinction between being himself in the first part, playing John Proctor in the second and playing himself

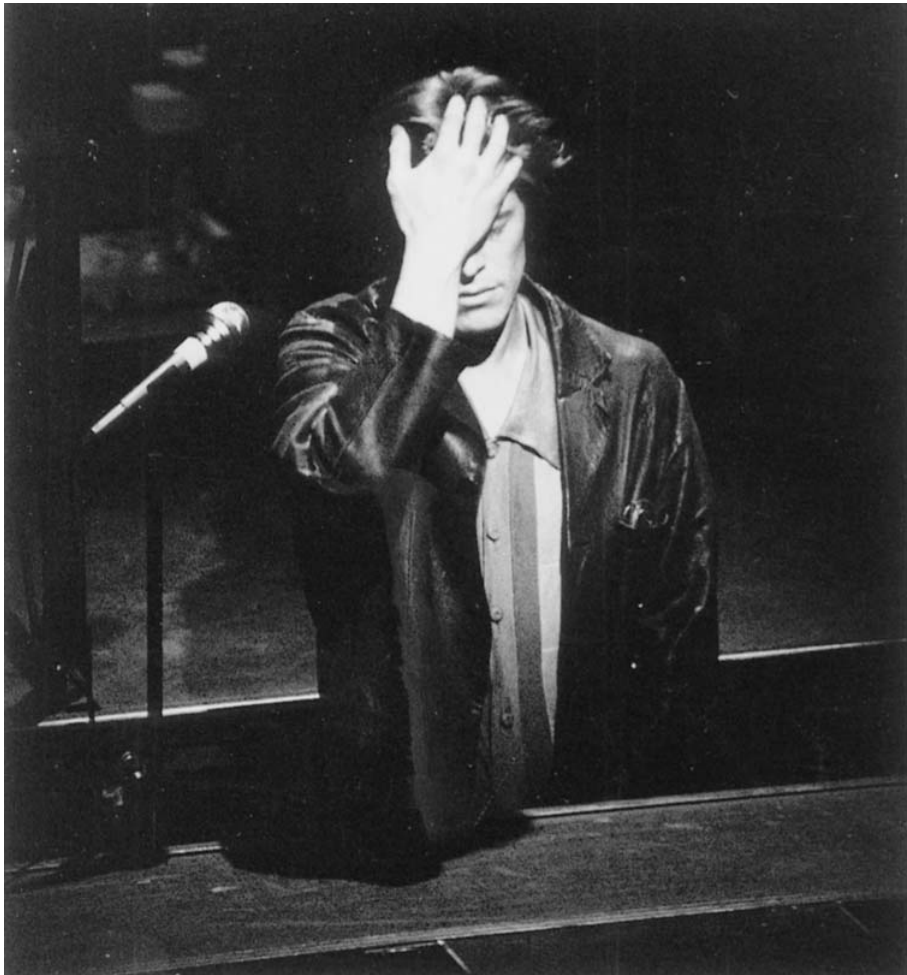


Fig. 24.1 Willem Dafoe in the Wooster Group's *LSD (. . . Just the High Points . . .)*. (Photo by Nancy Campbell.)

(stoned) rehearsing John Proctor in the third. All are manifestations of a single performing persona (Figure 24.1).

I never think about John Proctor. I do think about what the effect of a certain speech should be, or a certain section should be. I do respond to "here, you should relax a little bit more because you should have a lighter touch, he should be a nice guy here. Here, he can be pissed. Here, he's had it." And "he" is me because "John Proctor" means nothing to me. There's no real pretending, there's no transformation, John Proctor's no different than the guy reading the Bryan book [in Part I], he's no different than the guy in the third section who's saying, "Hey, come on, where the hell are we?" Just different action is required of him.

The complexity of his physical and vocal scores is liberating to Dafoe. Because his performance is not a matter of interpreting a role but of reenacting decisions based

on the evolution of the Group's personae made in the construction of the piece, "it's just about being it and doing it." This leaves the mind free – instead of trying to fill the moment with emotions analogous to the character's (Stanislavsky), the performer is left to explore his own relationship to the task he is carrying out.

There are kinds of meditative moments in even the most active parts, of even *The Crucible*. There's a speech where I say, "Whore!"; I accuse Abigail. Sometimes my mind kind of wanders in that. There's a double thing happening. I'm saying the text, but I'm always wondering what my relationship to the text is. Me, personally, not the character – 'cause I don't *know* about the character. If someone asked me about John Proctor the character, I wouldn't be able to tell him a thing.

The possibility of meditateness leads to a kind of catharsis, defined entirely in terms of the performance structure.

The way I get off in the performances is when I hit those moments of real pleasure and real clarity and an understanding about myself in relationship to the structure; it is work, it is an exercise of me for two hours, behaving a certain way and it can become meditative.

The creation of persona from self results in a measure of self-understanding, although both process and product are bound by the idea of performance: persona as performing self/understanding of oneself as performer.

Film acting is the unavoidable point of reference for a definition of performance as the development of a persona. Dafoe has appeared in half a dozen commercial films as well as experimental ones. He sees his film persona (the tough guy) as basically similar to his Wooster Group persona (the vulnerable man), "the only difference being that I usually play something dark. In these films that I've done there's a real dark streak, there's a mean streak that I don't so much have [in Wooster Group pieces]." Dafoe draws parallels between the process of making a film and that of making a theatre piece. Typecasting, "the fact that they've cast in this role, is not unlike a certain kind of tailoring that we do at the [Performing] Garage." The technical requirements of film acting correspond to the score of a Wooster Group performance and provide Dafoe a similar opportunity for reflection on his relationship as a performer to an inclusive process.

When you're doing a scene, you've gotta hit that little mark and if you don't hit the mark it spoils the shot. And, somewhere, I respond to that. Most people find that distracting, but that allows the frame for something to happen; it cuts down on my options and I'm a little more sure about what I want to do at any given point.

As in Group pieces, the imposition of a specific task creates a degree of freedom within the structure.

You get no sense of having to produce anything. What you're thinking about in a funny way is your relationship, almost literally, to this whole big thing, the 20 guys around, the black box, you're dressed up in a suit or you're dressed up in leather. You get some taste of what they want you to come across with, but what energizes you is the *whole* situation.

It is this consciousness of the whole situation that Dafoe finds valuable in both his theatre and film work and which becomes the material of his performance.

The issues he raises – persona, distance, audience perception of the performer, the performer’s perception of himself – are always part of performance, but are usually sublimated, at least in conventional work, to emphases on character and psychology. Film has frequently played consciously with the ambiguities of persona, but often in a purely manipulative way, as when movies are tailored to the gossip surrounding their stars to create a low-grade illusion/reality frisson for their audience. The intent of Dafoe’s work with the Wooster Group is to make these issues part of the performance’s subject by acknowledging that the performers’ personae are produced by the process as much as the process is produced by the performers. “Task and vision, vision in the form of a task”; the work’s vision *is* the task as performed by a certain group of people, and the task is a vision of what the performance should be and what those people can do. Within this circular system, the performer’s persona is at once his presentation of self to the audience and his image of himself performing. There is a certain frankness to the approach; the performer’s image is generated by the activity of the moment, by what the audience sees him doing under the immediate circumstances. Task/vision, vision/task; “The perfection of a persona is a noble way to go.”

25

DAVID WARRILOW

Creating symbol and cypher

Laurie Lassiter

In the mid-1960s, David Warrilow was in Paris as an editor of the English language edition of the magazine, *Realites*, a job he held for 11 years after graduating in French from Reading University, England. He met JoAnne Akalaitis in a theatre workshop, and she introduced him to Philip Glass, Ruth Maleczech and Lee Breuer, the people with whom he would later found the avant-garde theatre group, Mabou Mines.

My meeting with those people who eventually formed Mabou Mines was radical to the change that took place in me. Meeting them made it almost inevitable. They shook me up so. Their way of looking at things and talking about things threw my whole structure of the universe into chaos.

He felt he had to reevaluate everything.

The way that they were able to ask “Why not?” Why not the four of us work on Samuel Beckett’s *Play* for four months in the evening when David is not at the office, and why not just leave it at that? We don’t have to perform it; let’s just do that. I hadn’t come across that kind of thinking. It was new, vital and so compelling that even though it was scary, I decided to go with it. It was the beginning of a very long, difficult, joyful and extraordinary process that is still going on.

Warrilow had undergone no formal actor training and had only sporadically been involved in student theatre productions. He considers the work on *Play* his first serious acting. “We actually did do two performances,” he says, “and I suppose I can date my serious pursuit of acting from that moment.” The opportunity helped to provoke a crisis that was resolved through the choice of a new career. “In 1969, I realized that if I didn’t do something about my life – with regard to whether I was an actor or not – I was going to be in deep trouble at some point.” Although he found his job as an editor interesting and even exciting, Warrilow sensed that his commitment to it could never be complete. Unacknowledged aspects of himself claimed his attention. The possibility of taking himself seriously as an actor allowed him to leave “the middle class security” of his job for an uncertain but potentially fulfilling future.

I had to decide whether I was going to say “yes” or “no” to this part of me which other people recognized with seeming ease, but I tended to treat as pastime, fun, escapism, whatever; this part of me which wanted to be on the stage and seemed to know how to be on the stage without training. So, with the encouragement of that same group of people, I gave up my job – I was about to be 36 – and took two suitcases and left Paris.

Carrying his passport, revised at the British embassy in Paris to read “actor” instead of “journalist” (a “symbolic but very real act”), Warrilow returned to his own country. Since he was English, London seemed the logical place for him to perform.

It simply didn’t work. Nobody took any interest in me whatsoever. Then came the suggestion, largely from Philip Glass and JoAnne Akalaitis, that we regroup in New York and start a theatre company of our own. There didn’t seem to be a comfortable niche in the theatre as we saw it for what we were offering. So the idea was we’ll just do what we want to do, which meant basically not doing straight plays – exploring, searching for something, one didn’t exactly know what.

The group began work in New York on 1 January 1970. Warrilow was with Mabou Mines for nine years and performed in *Play*, *The Red Horse Animation*, *Music for Voices*, *The B-Beaver Animation*, *The Lost Ones*, *Cascando*, *Dressed Like an Egg* and *Southern Exposure*. He left the company in 1979.

As a freelancer, Warrilow has performed in a number of Samuel Beckett’s plays, including *A Piece of Monologue*, specifically written for him, and *Ohio Impromptu*, *Catastrophe*, *What Where* and *That Time*. He has performed in Mary Overlie’s dances, including *Window Pieces* and *Painter’s Dream*. At the Guthrie Theatre, he has acted in *As You Like It*, directed by Liviu Ciulei; Andrei Serban’s production of *The Marriage of Figaro*; *Heartbreak House*, directed by Christopher Markle; and *Hang On To Me* with director Peter Sellars. He also performed in Sellars’s *The Count of Monte Cristo* at the Kennedy Center. He has also been in numerous radio programs. His film credits include *Keep Busy* by Robert Frank and Rudy Wurlitzer, *Vestibule* by Ken Kobland, *Der Eintanzter* and *La Ferdinanda* by Rebecca Horn and the Joan Jonas video, *Double Lunar Dogs*. He played the role of the Old Man in Robert Wilson’s *The Golden Windows*, which opened at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in October 1985.

While he has performed in widely different forms – from the body of Mabou Mines’ work to dance pieces to film to repertory theatre – Warrilow sees a great similarity among his roles in the sense that each one has been a learning experience in a step-by-step process. “A career, whatever that means, after all can only be one piece of work after another. One brick placed on top of another. The learning process itself never stops; the process of examination never stops.”

At 50 [when this essay was first published in 1985, *editor*], Warrilow’s main concern in his career is how to choose work. One of the criteria he has used is the quality of the writing. “I tried to make decisions about whether or not I thought that the language was deep enough, great enough . . . I would stand off from the material: if it isn’t as good as Shakespeare, Dante or the Bible, why should I bother?”

He now believes, however, that the writing is an unreliable guide. The roles of director and actor seem more important in determining the work's final impact.

I found that an actor can bring something to language that is unfathomable, it's not knowable on a certain level of experience; it just appears. When it appears, it can illuminate words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, chapters, scenes, in such a way that you almost don't know if it's great writing or perfectly ordinary writing.

When Warrilow agreed to work with Peter Sellars for the second time, he had not seen the script of *The Count of Monte Cristo*. After the first reading, he realized that the play would be quite different from the Dumas novel on which it was based.

Peter Sellars had extracted material from the original novel. He added, in my case, quotations from the Bible. To some of the other characters he gave extracts or whole poems by Byron. Another dimension was added to Alexandre Dumas.

In production at the Kennedy Center, Warrilow found that the words were "immensely important" and that he had a "wonderfully written and constructed role, two roles in fact" – Old Dantes and the old priest, Faria. Old Dantes was set apart from the other characters and stage action by his appearance and movement quality, both of which served to intensify his presence.

The way I looked, the way I moved, the way of not relating sometimes to what was going on on stage – sometimes it was about *not* speaking, often in a slightly prophetic landscape *vis-a-vis* the immediate action that was going on. Also the fact that I looked different from everybody else – I was the only piece of anachronistic costuming, so I was set apart.

Given basic guidelines from Peter Sellars, Warrilow supplied the details of the characterization himself.

He wanted to see some form of age, some evidence of starvation, alacrity of delivery and that the character would appear to certain eyes as a combination of simpleton-prophet. I would move, say words, find what my position on stage told me in relation to the other people and gradually find a place in myself that I knew how to go to fast and comfortably so that this character could appear.

Warrilow developed the role largely through the choice of physical traits that showed the character's inner experience. For example, Sellars wanted a slow-motion walk. Warrilow created a walk for Old Dantes in which his head is bowed slightly forward and his knees are bent enough so that he steps onto a flat foot rather than a normal heel-to-toe stride. He glides across the floor, his head and upper body remaining level. By drawing on his studies in *taijiquan* with Mabou Mines and by observing Tadashi Suzuki's company then performing *The Trojan Women* at the Kennedy Center, he made the walk stronger and more emphatic, while retaining stillness in the upper body. He then added a hand gesture.

The character was, over a long period of time, dying of starvation. I knew that it would not be satisfying to me to place a hand over the stomach, which would be one's normal relationship to something like starvation . . . I then was drawn to think about the heart area because of the emotional nature of the relationship to the son, Edmond Dantes, who was to be in the scene with me. That, however, could look like a heart

condition and be misleading. So I placed the hand just on the bottom of the rib cage on the left side and instead of laying it flat against the body as if to hold in pain, I let the hand open gently and slightly curved so that to me inside it felt like an acknowledgement of hurt, but a willingness to accept.

Later in the play, Warrilow changed his walk in order to portray the ghost of Old Dantes. He identified the essential character quality and placed it in his body.

By the time I did the – let’s call it the 80-foot walk – I was a ghost of that man, so I no longer needed this [the hand gesture]. That could go. I could stand upright because a spirit is upright. A spirit is perfect; it’s the body that goes through these other . . . experiences. It was a slow walk, but a rather more normal one, so that it wasn’t drawing attention to physicality, psychology, emotion or any of those things because it’s about a spirit. A spirit moves more fluidly, just with infinitely more ease.

Once he had discovered the movement score, attention to his breathing helped to refine it.

Possibly the most important thing to pay attention to is breathing. When I was not choreographing my breath properly, or if I was trying to push it and manipulate it in an uncomfortable way, something would start to go wrong. If the breathing was all right, everything else seemed to be all right. I didn’t know how to do that slow-motion walk and do sporadic deep breathing. If I didn’t breathe shallowly, my whole sense of balance went off.

In performing his other role, the old priest in the dungeon of the Château d’If, Warrilow relied on his breathing to regulate the effort necessary for a character of intense presence and magnified vocal expression. With long matted gray hair, a long black beard and a tattered robe, Faria resembled a Biblical prophet. A microphone amplified his speech and created reverberations. Warrilow sustained his voice’s volume and power while coordinating his performance with another actor and the music. The first half was scored to Beethoven’s string quartet Opus 95, and the second half intermittently to a string quartet by the Russian dissident, Schnittke. Warrilow constantly noticed the tempo, depth and audibility of his breathing. “What I found finally was that breathing was the one constant. Any performer, just like a woman giving birth, is well advised to pay particular attention to that human function and never to take it for granted.”

Controlling his breathing enabled him to prepare for what was to come “in half a minute, in a minute, in three minutes.” By focusing on his breath at a particular moment, he could easily regulate the speed or volume of his speech. In his 80-foot walk, he timed his movement so that he would arrive at the exact moment a certain line was spoken by an actor whose timing would change each night. By listening and focusing on his breathing, he was able to speed up or slow down imperceptibly.

It’s like driving a car and knowing you’re going to need to turn off the highway at a certain point. You haven’t reached that yet, but you know you are going to, you plan to; so something in your system is already dealing with that. You can’t play the moment until it comes, but you can in some way anticipate it, it just doesn’t need to show that that’s what’s going on. Quiet it down, or start to deepen the breathing, or have it be shallow, all that purposefully instead of accidentally.

A key process for Warrilow is the exchange between the structure of an acting score and the experience of flow. In *Ohio Impromptu*, which premiered at Ohio State University in 1981 and opened in New York at the Harold Clurman Theatre in 1984, director Alan Schneider urged an exact conformity to the stage directions in Beckett's text. Warrilow, who played the Reader, says:

It is highly choreographed. I mean, choreographed to the point where the conventional actor, if I can call him that, would probably find it absolutely intolerable and insulting. I have an entirely different experience of it. To me, the greater the degree of accuracy of the parameters, the greater the freedom of action within.

In rehearsal, Schneider drilled the actor playing the Listener (Rand Mitchell) so that his hand on the table would be as close as possible to a photographic representation of Warrilow's hand on the other side of the table. Warrilow would place himself at the table so that his left hand rested parallel to the book before him in a position mirrored by the Listener. One finger of his right hand, which was shading his eyes, would touch the hairline of his white wig.

Though the score is precisely structured in space, Warrilow emphasizes that there is no such thing as sameness in any two performances. He examines a brief section of his performance in *Ohio Impromptu* as though under a magnifying glass, revealing the level of the unexpected always present in live performance:

I'm now going to the book to take the page, which can be recalcitrant, and I have to deal with it, and it's going to come up, and that page doesn't know what "same" means, by the way. And it's going over, and then the page bends, slightly in the middle, and I let it down so that there is the minimum of stress and the maximum of soundlessness. Then I'm going to have to let go of the page. Now I'm going to put my hand down, back down on the table, in such a way that it's not going to be different from his hand. This is like a breath almost, this hand coming down. With the exhale, there's a settling that happens.

For Warrilow, performance structure and processual flow are two sides of the same coin. No matter how strictly choreographed a piece, a level of improvisation occurs.

Improvisation only means that which is not foreseen, that which appears at the moment. Something is always appearing at the moment. The point is how much attention do you pay to it. I now pay great attention to what happens in the moment, and it's part of the flow of each performance. It is what brings to life the structure.

A central force in Warrilow's career has been his belief that human beings are "not immutable organisms"; rather, they can change their behavior and attitudes to be more comfortable and productive. This belief, underlying his ability to create a new career for himself as an actor at 36, has enabled him to move into different realms of performance and to cross genre lines. A clear example is his work with choreographer Mary Overlie.

In the work I've done with Mary Overlie, she has invited me to improvise to a certain degree within a particular structure. Mary Overlie seems to me to be a very rich amalgam of commitment to structure and mental process and a deep investment in the inner and spontaneous process that is always present in performance.

At the same time that he was drawn to Overlie's work, he had reservations about performing in a dance because he didn't consider himself a "dancer." Through his participation, however, he realized that dance was not alien to his own experience.

I looked at myself more carefully. I have always loved to dance. My mother taught me ballroom dancing when I was 14 and 15, and I used to go to formal dances with my parents in white tie and tails. All of which was a bit of a contrivance so that when my father was at the bar, my mother could have a partner – in me. I got to experience the pleasure of dancing. And I was good at it.

The obstacle that he assumed he would have to overcome was one of attitude. "I was making those demarcations and separations and erecting barriers between those various activities – my body didn't."

Through the acknowledgement of his skills and the acceptance of responsibility for them, the solution was found.

Somewhere in me is the ability to visualize and then actualize line – line like painterly, sculptural, dancier line, and shape. And to use the body as a way of creating symbol and cypher and of depicting energy in action and in space . . . It was always there. The question was: would I accept it and use it or would I deny it? Every day that goes by I understand that there is something in me that has always been there . . . that I haven't yet fully said yes to.

At one time, Warrilow also sensed a dividing line between his own experience and that of musicians. "I used to envy musicians. My attitude was: they have something I don't have. I love what they have. What a shame." During a performance, he broadened his definition of what a musician is in order to extend the category within which he was working.

When I was performing *The Lost Ones* – I might have done the piece already a hundred times when this happened – an understanding came to me that I was a musician, if only because I used and modulated my voice.

This insight allowed him to approach the text from a different orientation.

I therefore decided, privately, that I was going to perform that piece as if I were playing a piano concerto. I was not going to, in any way, pay attention to the intellectual, academic literary *meaning* of the phrases. I decided to perform it as if it were all notes.

By enlarging his sense of himself as a performer to include "musician" as well as "actor," Warrilow deepened the experience of the play, both for himself and, apparently, for the audience.

What I discovered when I did that in *The Lost Ones* was that some other level of experience appeared both for me and for the audience. People seemed to receive it on a deeper level that they didn't quite know how to describe. The very fact that audiences who didn't speak English could be just as enthusiastic as those who did was and is very mysterious to me.

By performing the words as a musical score, Warrilow recognized how the actor may transmit something that is beyond his own understanding.

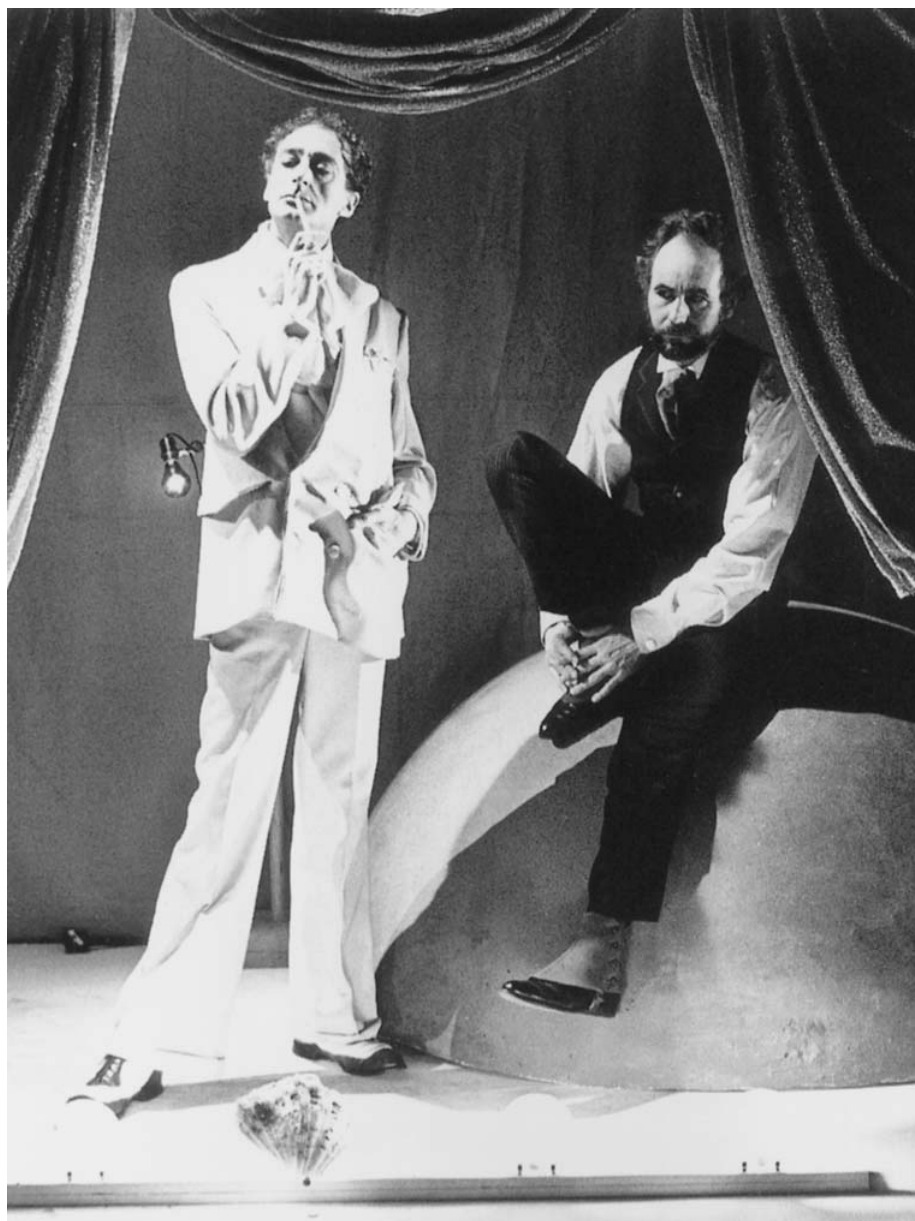


Fig. 25.1 David WarriLOW and William Raymond in *Dressed Like an Egg*. (Photo by Richard Landry.)

Things would appear to me from the text that I hadn't quite known were there. It's very difficult to describe. Sometimes when you are dealing intensely with the production and giving of a word or phrase which you know, you think you know by heart, you suddenly *hear* it for the first time. And you don't quite know what's happening. You say, but I thought I knew what this was. Well, then you know you don't know what it really is.

His discoveries caused him to reconsider what an actor's function is.

I am responsible for certain aspects of a performance, but there's a whole other level which is coming from outside of me. What I'm supposed to do is channel that, whatever it is. My image of it is that energy – light – is coming to the top of my head, which is where the "soul" is supposed to enter the body; and that I am to channel it. It is channeled this way . . . goes through the vocal, physical, breathing mechanism which is called David Warrilow and then it is given to whomever is waiting to receive it.

Warrilow's relationship to the audience has undergone a shift over a long period of years.

There was a time when my perception of the audience was "us" and "them." I was so full of anxiety and insecurity that I was not able to enter into the proper flow of the exchange, as I now perceive it can be and ideally must be . . . I therefore was for a long time in the position of investing a great deal of energy in defending what I was doing against supposed criticism – often because of the unusual nature of the material or style that I was involved in.

When he first performed *The Lost Ones*, directed by Lee Breuer in a Mabou Mines production, he had little time to think about what the response of the audience might be. The performance took place only three weeks after the decision to do it as a staged reading. "That process was so rapid," he says, "and my evaluation of the material so fearful and inaccurate that my prediction was that it would be intolerable to an audience." In fact, audience reception of *The Lost Ones* was quite favorable, changing Warrilow's views.

What I had to understand about the actor's relationship to the audience . . . with a piece of work that one would consider dense and difficult and to some people dark was to what point members of an audience are willing to be challenged, the degree of courage that they bring to the theatre experience.

Focusing on refining his art frees Warrilow from trying to control audience response. His concern is self-mastery.

If I as an actor invest myself to the best of my ability in the work I have chosen to present – if I give it my best energy – then there's a chance that the audience can trust what is going on on stage. If I hold back, if I sit in judgment on myself or the material or the audience, then there is less chance that the audience is going to be justified in trusting and therefore joining the experience. If the actor is willing to go through some kind of transmutation, then the audience can, too.

ROBERT WILSON AND THE ACTOR

Performing in *Danton's Death*¹

Ellen Halperin-Royer

Like many postmodern artists, Robert Wilson is frequently misunderstood by those who are not familiar with his creative process. Influenced early in his career by artists, composers, and especially modern dance choreographers – Martha Graham, George Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, Meredith Monk, and Alwin Nikolais – Wilson places great emphasis on visual imagery and movement. Wilson's productions in the 1960s and 1970s were generally abstract performance pieces that utilized sound, movement, and visual images to stimulate the audience's imagination.² Particularly notorious examples of Wilson's experiments with performance time and space include *Deafman Glance* (1970), a seven-hour "silent opera" inspired by Wilson's friendship with Raymond Andrews, a deaf boy, and *Ka Mountain* (1972), a single performance that lasted 168 continuous hours on Haft Tan Mountain, Shiraz, Iran. In these and other early works, Wilson made use of the nonprofessional performers who were part of his group of dedicated followers. Such a practice, combined with Wilson's interest in the creation of breathtaking images, perhaps furthered a commonly held impression that Wilson could work with robots as easily as actors. Although Wilson has worked with professionals since he directed *Einstein on the Beach* in 1976, the majority of these performers have been vocalists and dancers from the European opera companies with which he has collaborated.

Since the mid-1980s, Wilson began to explore the adaptation and staging of canonical plays. Thomas Derrah, who performed in *the CIVIL warS (German Section)* (1985), *Alcesteis* (1986), and *Danton's Death*, described the development in Wilson's work as follows:

The work he was doing then (during *the CIVIL warS*) was less linear, less verbal, more or less a pastiche. . . . It didn't have a great deal of narrative. It was ramblings, free associations, and sounds. The next thing I did was *Alcesteis* which, although close to Euripides, it was overlaid with a ten to twelve page sentence [Heiner] Müller wrote called "A description of a Picture" that [was] spoke[n] throughout. So the text was again sublimated to the visual aspect of it. And a kyogen play, *The Birdcatcher from*

Hell was added to the end . . . I think his shift toward text is a very important one, his development in his own work to actual narrative. To my knowledge this [*Danton's Death*] is the most narrative of the projects so far, at least that have been constructed in this country.

Along with creating new challenges for Wilson as a director, this shift to working with canonical, narrative texts created fascinating challenges for his company of actors. While working on productions in which the text consisted of nonlinear sounds, Wilson and the performers were free to concentrate on creating striking visual images. However, while creating *Danton's Death* Wilson and the actors had to communicate the characters, ideas, and emotions found in Büchner's script to the audience.

Despite this recent narrative trend, some question remains as to whether or not Wilson's work actually requires highly skilled acting technique. In order to better understand Wilson's creative process and its effect on the acting company, I inquired about the possibility of observing rehearsals of Wilson's production of *Danton's Death*. In 1992, the Alley Theatre allowed me to sit behind the table of directors, stage managers, designers, and other artists who collaborated on Wilson's production of *Danton's Death* to observe a three-week workshop followed two months later by a six-week rehearsal period. Interested in learning about the way Wilson interacts with actors and how actors understood and processed their work with Wilson, I interviewed all but two of the cast members.

Many of the actors were concerned that Wilson would not value or appropriately use their skills; all of them entered the rehearsal process with some degree of cynicism. The attitude of Jon David Weigand, who acted in *Danton's Death*, was typical in this regard:

I had never seen his work until the Ibsen play [*When We Dead Awaken*] at the ART [American Repertory Theatre]. And I had been at ART all through the rehearsal process and felt his presence in the building. Everybody bowed down. He got whatever he wanted. There were new lights put into the dance studio. And I was a bit skeptical about all this, but I really went expecting to be blown away by it, and I fell asleep. I hated it. I thought it was a big farce. I really was angry at how much money was invested in something that I felt wasn't even theatre. *I mean why did they even use actors? He's a sculptor and they shouldn't be calling it theatre.* (emphasis added)

Weigand finished his story by adding, "I didn't go back and see it again and I regret that a lot. A lot of my friends did go back and see it again and really grew to respect it tremendously." Similarly, many of the actors in the company of *Danton's Death* changed their opinion of Robert Wilson. Bettye Fitzpatrick, a veteran Alley company member who played a drunken jailer, aptly quipped, "I think several of us who may have come to scoff have stayed to pray."

As the actors gained firsthand experience working with Wilson, their preconceived notions about this notorious director changed. My close observation of the rehearsal process showed that most of the misgivings actors brought with them to rehearsal were based on misperceptions: specifically, 1) that Wilson's actors are mechanical puppets who need not relate to other actors or production elements on stage; 2) that Wilson would not collaborate with his actors; 3) that Wilson would not interpret the text nor want his actors to engage in imaginative script analysis; 4)

that Wilson is an intuitive, inarticulate director who would not explain his choices to the actors; and 5) that Wilson would not want his actors to connect emotionally to the text. Most importantly, any notion that performing in a Wilson production required something less than masterly acting technique was quickly dispelled during the rehearsal process of *Danton's Death*. Despite some element of truth in the actors' initial misperceptions, this essay shows why and how the actors' ideas about working with Wilson changed during the rehearsal process.

Before turning to interview results, it may be helpful to briefly summarize the play's primary features and immediate reception. Robert Auletta's adaptation of *Danton's Death* streamlined Büchner's epic romantic drama revolving around the passive, existential figure of Danton, a man who wishes to die in order to escape the horrors of the French Revolution.³ Auletta eliminated characters and combined scenes, but he did not change the story, omit the philosophical monologues, or minimize emotional elements. Danton's wife's suicide, Camille's wife's descent into insanity, and the contrast between Danton's passivity and his friend Camille's excitability all remain.

Reviews of the play were generally positive. John Rockwell from the *New York Times* described the production as "one of the director's finest achievements." The reviewer continued:

Again, as usual, the essence of Mr. Wilson's vision is visual: extraordinarily cool, sensuous, elegant stage pictures that he says are inspired by David but look archetypically Wilsonian. What makes this production more potent than some of Mr. Wilson's recent work, however, is how the formalism contains and contrasts with the passion of the play and of the actors, and the especially beautiful impact of the images Mr. Wilson has conjured.

As Rockwell's comments may indicate, Wilson's minimalist aesthetic greatly influenced his rendition of Büchner's script. Throughout much of the play, the actors were lit only by follow spots. The black stage was frequently bare, and the back wall consisted of a series of black screens that moved to create a variety of geometric designs. In the second scene, when the audience first meets the tumultuous street mob, Wilson had one actor, James Black, play the entire mob. The actor developed a separate dialect and physicalization for each character in the mob. The dialogue was delivered as the actor moved from upstage left to downstage left on the bare stage. Upon Robespierre's entrance, one of the upstage center screens that formed the black backdrop rose, creating a doorway of light that framed Robespierre's black figure. While both actors faced downstage, Robespierre, speaking from upstage center, convinced "the mob" to join him at the national assembly. In the following scene, Robespierre addressed the national assembly while standing on a pedestal center stage. There were no other actors onstage. The lines spoken by members of the assembly were only heard on tape. Only assemblyman Legendre appeared in the flesh, and he spoke from a side-stage located halfway back in the house. These are some examples of how Wilson deconstructed the text into penetrating visual and aural images that captured the essence of Büchner's play.

Many *Danton's Death* performers believed that the acting company influenced Wilson as much as Wilson influenced the acting company. The cast ranged from highly trained performers with MFAs from Yale or Juilliard to actors with a great deal of professional experience but no degree at all in theatre. Veteran actor

Richard Thomas played the role of Danton, while other actors were still in college with few, if any, professional credits. Although a few actors had worked previously with Wilson or other avant-garde directors, most were only superficially familiar with Wilson's work. As it turned out, the actors' previous backgrounds greatly affected their response to Wilson's rehearsal process.

As noted above, most of the actors began the workshop and rehearsal process with misconceptions about how Wilson works with actors. Alley company member John Felch said, "There was a lot of reinforcement of the idea of puppet master, tyrant, all of that. I did go in, not dreading it, but feeling I was going to end up in a fight – all of us talking, saying who's the first one up against the wall." In addition, many actors believed that Wilson would not want actors to express emotion. Felch remarked, "We lived in terror that if he heard a hint of feeling we were done for." Marissa Chibas, who played Danton's wife, explained:

I thought I was going to be told exactly what to do at all times. . . . Even after the workshop I thought now he's going to tell me what to do. And then I realized that he is waiting for me to do my work, and I'm not going to be told what to do. He may not say anything, but I have to keep doing my work.

In a similar vein, it was a revelation to Chibas that Wilson expected her to create her own character. Even more surprising was that Wilson encouraged her to collaborate on script interpretation. Chibas recalled:

I knew something (in the scene) was missing . . . and I was waiting for him to tell me what it should be and he said, "Is there anything you'd like to try?" My heart started racing like crazy and I said, "Yes" . . . and I thought just see what happens, let whatever impulse you have go . . . and he said, "Fine, that's good."

Contrary to the myth that Wilson's performers do not need to be masters of their craft, I found that only those actors with the strong sense of self that comes from a combination of formal training and experience were able to remain focused on creating a character in the high pressure environment that permeated *Danton's Death* rehearsals. Although Wilson was always cordial, never raised his voice, and never reminded the cast either verbally or nonverbally of his prestigious reputation, he was still the internationally renowned "Robert Wilson." Often surrounded by an entourage of benefactors and assistants, he frequently made calls to Europe and Japan to discuss projects in progress at other locations. His unprotected charcoal renderings of the "Danton" set, which later sold for \$5,000 each, were mounted around the rehearsal hall. In addition to the high-profile environment, Wilson himself is a somewhat formal, elegant person in his dress, manner, and overall presentation. Furthermore, Wilson is not schooled in actor training and therefore does not share the vocabulary actors use. For example, during rehearsals Wilson often used abstract, painterly language such as, "this scene needs more air."

Integral to the rehearsal process of *Danton's Death* was the presence of Wilson's long-time assistant director Ann-Christin Rommen. Many of the actors felt they would never have been able to fulfill Wilson's vision without her help. Rommen's understanding of Wilson's work is so thorough that on productions of Wilson revivals, she often rehearses alone with the cast and crew until Wilson's arrival during tech week. Rommen's personal style and demeanor complement Wilson's

own. During rehearsals of *Danton's Death* Rommen was warm and nurturing, and spoke to the actors in terms they understood. Whereas Wilson spent most of his time sitting behind the director's table, speaking softly to the actors through a microphone, Rommen walked over to each actor individually and had private conversations.

On the first day, Wilson described the workshop phase of the rehearsal process as "creating the visual book" and explained his belief that the "visual book" is as important as the "audio book" or the text. For Wilson, movement should not illustrate the text. The "visual book" has its own significance, carries its own weight and its own meaning. To illustrate the text with the movement would make the performance predictable, literal and boring.⁴ Wilson began creating the visual book by reading and discussing the first scene of the play and then letting the actors improvise movement. Here the audience meets Danton, his wife, and some friends as they talk, drink, and play cards. Danton's allies interrupt the gaiety to warn him of the continued slaughter at the guillotine and rumors that Danton will soon be arrested. Most of the actors responded by moving very slowly because of their belief that Wilson does everything in slow motion. Wilson encouraged the actors to vary the pace of their moves, to think abstractly, to consider doing the opposite of what they think is proper. He prodded them by giving a few specifics and letting them try it again. One woman moved a card towards her slowly for a few beats and then giggled and quickly put it down. Yet, for a long time the scene remained very slow and serious. Wilson stimulated actors' imaginations by adding sound effects of people laughing, cards shuffling, and playing music. He worked in this manner for at least five hours and then discarded everything and started over.

The actors never again read and discussed a scene. Since the work in the first scene had progressed at a painfully slow rate without satisfactory results, Wilson spent the rest of the workshop using a much more prescriptive method. He began working on scenes by placing actors in initial positions, dictating to them a series of movements, and assigning a number to each movement. Rommen wrote these movements down in shorthand, and the actors then memorized the numbered movements. Once the movements were learned (usually the following day), Wilson rehearsed the scene by having either the dramaturg or a production assistant read the text while the actors executed each movement at the moment Wilson called its number. A few times Wilson mixed up the sequence of the numbered movements, calling out "one, two, three, four, three, four, five. . . ." The stage managers wrote every number Wilson called out into the script. The actors then memorized the word corresponding to each numbered movement. The actors practiced performing the movements at the correct time as the text was read from the director's table until the movement was mastered; finally, the actors spoke their own lines while performing Wilson's movements on cue.

Derrah, a veteran Wilson performer, described his first encounter with Wilson's "number system" during his audition for *the CIVIL warS*:

I was terrified. . . . People would come out and be utterly perplexed and they would say, "Well, he had me walk across the floor in 20, then sit down in 15 and put my hand to my neck, then tilt my head up in 12" and everyone would write that down . . . so I went in . . . and he said walk across the floor in, I don't know, arbitrarily I'll say 59 and sit down in a chair in 42, put your hand to your head in 12 then your hand down to

your lap in something. There were 6 or 7 moves. And when I got done he said, “Yes, you’re the only one so far who can count.”

Wilson acknowledged that this work was difficult. He fondly recalled the story of a “diva” soprano who, by the seventy-fifth move, broke down screaming in frustration at having to remember all these numbers, sing these notes, and make these movements all at the same time. *Danton’s Death* sometimes had as many as fifty-four moves within three pages of text. Far from the myth that a puppet could perform successfully in a Wilson play, learning Wilson’s “visual book” or “form” demanded strong discipline, focused concentration, and acute physical awareness. Richard Thomas, who had never worked with Wilson before, was remarkably quick at learning the movements and connecting the movements to the text. A few actors executed the moves in a robotic manner throughout the workshop and were later dropped from the cast. Others were able to make emotional connections between the numbered movements and the text almost immediately. Generally, actors who had strong training in dance or movement enjoyed working this way because it provided a physical approach to the character.

A production assistant videotaped everything that happened on stage throughout the workshop and rehearsal process in order to precisely document the “visual book.” Wilson sometimes stepped onstage to demonstrate movements for the actors that he could not describe. Since Wilson could rarely replicate these movements, actors who needed to study or copy these movements consulted the videotape. Similarly, if an actor did something that Wilson wanted to retain, the actor could then refer back to the precise image using the video recording.

There was a three-month gap between the three-week workshop and the six-week rehearsal period. During interviews, cast members used phrases like “what a luxury” (Annalee Jefferies) to describe this workshop/break/rehearsal format. Some had been skeptical about the break because they were afraid they would lose momentum and spend much of the rehearsal time trying to remember what they did in the workshop. However, the actors universally found that the break gave the material and style time to sink in, even as they worked on unrelated projects. Gage Tarrant, who played a small part in the production, explained:

I like it a lot because it’s such a different style. It gave you a gestation period between the workshop and rehearsal to process it all and let it sink in over a period of time . . . what he was going for . . . and you can look back and go, “That’s what he meant when he asked me to raise my arm, that’s what I was doing wrong.” You need the introduction to his style before you start rehearsing.

Jennifer Arisco, who also played a small role, explained, “I thought it was a really good idea because if we went away and didn’t think about it for a month, it’s still in your subconscious and you’re much more familiar with it.”

Wilson was out of the country rehearsing another production during the first week of the rehearsal period. During that week, Rommen used the videotape to help the actors recreate the “visual book.” Upon Wilson’s return, the work became more and more like the rehearsal process of any other play. Songs were choreographed. Pacing and flow were major issues because the script consisted of many short scenes. Stop-and-go scene work was interspersed with run-throughs followed by notes. Many of the notes Wilson gave were no different than comments directors

frequently make while directing a traditional play: “Pick up your cues without picking up the pace”; “Find the headlines in the monologues”; “Make sure you’re projecting to the back of the room”; “Make sure you’re responding to the incidental music”; and “Make sure you’re listening to the other actors on stage.”

These “traditional” notes about listening to other actors and incorporating the music into the actors’ performance discredits the belief that Wilson’s actors are mechanical puppets not expected to respond to other actors or production elements. To the contrary, Wilson frequently encouraged the actors to find what he called the “edges” in the play – edges, or contrasts, between different actor’s voices, and between what was happening in the music and the movement. Willis Sparks, who played Legendre, explained what “edges” meant to him:

Edges really just means tension. For example, in the crowd scene when I was marching . . . the natural instinct is to march in the same rhythm [as the music], but you shouldn’t do that because there’s no tension. So I try not only marching in different rhythms, but to change the speed as you go, faster, slower, for no other reason that it’s more interesting to look at. If it doesn’t change, you don’t have to watch past the first few seconds.

Such work demanded total awareness of the actor’s environment, the other actors on stage, what happened before the actor’s entrance and after the actor’s exit, as well as a command of the actor’s vocal and physical instrument.

Though many of the cast members, such as Weigand and Felch, had not expected Wilson to collaborate effectively with actors, all had, by the end of the project, changed their minds. Wilson collaborated intensely with his performers, and many actors felt that Wilson intuitively drew upon their natural abilities. Weigand explained:

I think he collaborated with my spirit . . . I found it erotic in a strange way, being with someone who is that controlling. Because the freedom I found was a different kind of freedom than I found working with someone like Anne Bogart or someone who depends so much on my impulses. I was required to fill out what he sketched, and I think it’s exciting.

In a similar way, Alley company veteran Annalee Jefferies explained how Wilson’s detailed physical form was liberating rather than confining: “Something magical happens with his movement incorporated into what I had. When he gives certain boundaries like that, I’m free. I’m free within those very strict boundaries. I like that. I like the challenge of making them mine.”

Wilson encouraged the actors to speak up if a move did not feel right, and he usually agreed to modifications requested by the actors. Richard Thomas frequently discussed the “form” with Wilson. For example, Thomas sometimes combined two moves into one in order to make the movement more elegant and economical. Once he slightly changed the timing of a move to avoid illustrating the text. Danton said, “– in a few hours he will be asleep in the arms of glory” (54) and the actor moved his arms as if rocking a baby. Thomas suggested that the rocking gesture occur before the line, rather than on the line, and Wilson agreed. Wilson often thanked Thomas for his input and seemed to appreciate that Thomas understood his aesthetic well enough to add his own contributions. Wilson occasionally allowed actors to make up their own moves. After prescribing a list of moves,

Wilson sometimes said, “now do something else.” While rehearsing a scene in which a jailer informs members of the revolutionary committee that prisoners are dying, Black jokingly added a soft shoe move. Much to his surprise, Wilson said “Good, keep it.” Black and Fitzpatrick, who often provided comic relief, were frequently directed to choose their own movements that then became codified in the form.

The widely held belief that Wilson would not interpret the text, nor invite his actors to engage in imaginative script analysis, was also dispelled during the rehearsal process. One striking example involved a suggestion made by Jefferies, who played Marion, a prostitute Danton visits early in the play. According to Jefferies, Wilson asked her what she thought of her scene. In response, Jefferies related how she understood her character as similar to the mythical Persephone. In her scene with Danton, she saw herself on Persephone’s throne as she helps others through their passage into the underworld. She saw a huge sheet on the floor and herself in one corner wrapping herself in this sheet very slowly pulling it around her, so that it was bound around her by the end of her speech. The next day Jefferies suggested that if there is a moment when Danton is grappling with death, she might be in the background to provide tension or somehow remind Danton of what her character said earlier in the play. Wilson used this idea in Act 2 when Danton was walking alone in open country and flirting with the idea of death. While Thomas moved frenetically in a box of light downstage, Jefferies moved very slowly and beautifully (Wilson choreographed every muscle of her body) across the back of the stage in a luminescent space. Jefferies, wrapped in a translucent fabric that trailed behind her as she made her way across the space, provided one of the most compelling images in the play.

Unlike the assumptions discussed this far, the belief that Wilson is an intuitive director incapable of explaining his choices proved, in some ways, to be true. Although the director was almost always able to provide a clear explanation for a specific choice of movement or staging, his use of abstract words that are outside traditional acting lingo often makes him appear enigmatic. The term “edges” is a good example of his idiosyncratic vocabulary. Another is his use of the term “surprises.” Wilson wanted the actors to make surprising movements, do surprising things with their voices, and find surprises in their characterizations. Wilson believes that if the audience can predict what the actor is going to do next, then the performance will be boring: if an actor knows he is about to turn left on stage, he should think about turning right, so the turn to the left will be a surprise. Wilson explained that in the theatre we make a “vocabulary” with the audience of movement, sound, and images. Once this vocabulary is understandable to the audience, we must “destroy the code,” a deconstruction that leads to the creation of a new vocabulary.

Wilson also told the actors not to be too musical with their voices: “Don’t be in love with your voice.” Wilson explained that if the voice is too musical, the audience will listen to the sound of the voice and miss what the actor is saying. During the workshop some actors responded with a flat, monotone delivery. Wilson then complained that he did not understand what the actor was saying. Just as Wilson did not want movements to be executed mechanically, without emotional connection to the character, so too did he look for vocal “surprises” to be motivated by character. Weigand, who played St. Just, a particularly

bloodthirsty figure from the French Revolution, was unusually successful at motivating Wilson's vocal "surprises." Wilson told the actor to insert a screeching sound in specific points in the dialogue. The actor was at a loss about how to incorporate this idea into his performance until he decided that these screeches were the "goodness" trying to come to the surface of this evil person. The screeches allowed St. Just to choke back his "goodness" or his conscience. Weigand's ability to find a motivation for Wilson's directions provides an example of the adaptability, imagination, emotional depth, and vocal technique necessary to imbue Wilson's form with meaning.

Another difficult direction for actors was Wilson's demand to "sustain the line, the line only continues." In other words, an actor should not think in terms of taking two steps and stopping; rather, the line of movement continues through the stillness so that when the actor begins walking again, the movement is simply continuing. Wilson, who dislikes the stop and start quality he observes in most productions, spent rehearsal time teaching actors how to walk while maintaining a smooth line. Another common rehearsal note: "You must never drop the tension." Actors were asked to sustain the emotional line as well as the physical line. Several actors misinterpreted this concept and were constantly holding physical tension in their muscles. Wilson said they looked "constipated" and instructed them to find the point of relaxation. Weigand explained, "I've been working with the point of relaxation inside of this work, inside of myself. And for me it can be relaxing just my chest and keeping the rest of my body really involved, which can really open up a lot more things for me." Derrah said that Wilson's concepts of tension and relaxation had a lot to do with anxiety: "The easiest solution to that was to not forget to breathe . . . You can forget (to breathe) because you're remembering where this hand goes, and that count, and trying not to be a robot, so that you forget the most basic things that keep it alive." Chibas compared Wilson's concept of "sustaining line" to yoga: "When you hold a position in yoga, your body is relaxed but you're sending energy through the body." For Fitzpatrick, "sustaining the line" and "keeping the tension" meant the following:

Bob said, "I'm not interested in the ping-pong game where I speak, you speak, I speak, and we're batting verbiage back and forth over the net." People like [Alfred] Lunt and [Lynn] Fontanne could do it brilliantly, a very fine career about batting ping-pong balls back and forth at each other. But I'll bet you if you stripped them down and you said how do you maintain that – they keep the line. They continue the line. They're doing exactly what Bob's saying to. They keep the thought alive.

Matthew Rippy, who played a nonspeaking guard throughout the thirty-minute preshow, found the concept of sustaining the line very useful:

Wilson says as you're exiting the stage, imagine that your body is staying there, or as you enter the stage imagine you're already there . . . I tried to have that image in my head, of my line continuing out there. He would say imagine the sound is coursing through your body and it's everywhere. It's in your toes. Say the line from your elbow, the sound in your knee cap. And so I would sometimes imagine it that way, and other people's lines as well coming through me.

John Felth explained this concept slightly differently. "A lot of that stillness for me is absolutely informed by an internal energy. . . . I'm trying to make a connection to

the audience that is very visceral in that stillness.” Sustaining the line, even in stillness, and sustaining the tension were internal, mental concepts. Later in the interview Feltch confessed, “I have aches in places I’ve never had them before because trying to sustain, trying to have the kind of poise that he requires . . . it is hard to give the kind of coldness and tension that he wants in the work and [to] relax.”

Although Wilson’s idiosyncratic use of language frequently made him difficult to comprehend, it is not entirely accurate to describe Wilson as a director who cannot explain his choices. The actor playing Lucille, Camille’s wife who is driven crazy by the cruel violence happening around her, was given a rocking motion to perform. Since rocking was not literally connected to what was going on in the scene, the actor asked for Wilson’s reasoning behind the move. Wilson explained that the character was continually hitting her head against a brick wall, an image the actor found perfect for explaining what the character was experiencing on a subconscious level. Many of the actors discovered that watching other scenes in rehearsal and hearing Wilson use his unique vocabulary with other actors helped them interpret Wilson’s lexicon. Willis Sparks, who played Legendre, explained:

Not only did I see some other people [who] had a handle on it . . . but [I was] watching people who didn’t have a handle on it. . . . Then all of a sudden you have a reference point. It’s so hard when you’re onstage to have any objectivity at all. You’re just trying to please him in the moment so you can get offstage. But when you’re out in the audience, relaxed, no one’s looking at you, [you can] get into his mind a bit and see what he’s getting. That’s when you learn this or any other process. For example, watching Annalee even as far back as the workshop made me realize that what she was doing was not mechanical. She was still a person, yet [there was] a complete lack of sentimentality. Yet she was still talking almost like a human being. You knew what she was saying. She had a character history, like any other character, but still there was something not quite finished about what she was doing, in a good way, that made you keep watching.

Perhaps the most harmful preconception actors brought to rehearsal was an assumption that Wilson did not want the actors to connect emotionally with the material. This assumption was reinforced on the first day when Wilson stated that he hates naturalism, that to act naturally onstage is a lie. Wilson explained his preference for a formal, more distant theatre in which the audience can enter at will and actively interpret the images onstage. Far from telling the audience what to think or feel, Wilson wants to ask provocative questions for each audience member to answer individually. Wilson spent a good deal of rehearsal time telling actors not to be “precious” or “sentimental.” Another frequent statement was, “You don’t need to cry, you want to make the audience cry.” Wilson went beyond the common director’s note that “less is more” regarding emotion. He told the actors to give a “cold, hard, flat” delivery of the text. This reinforced the fear that, as Feltch said, “If he heard a hint of feeling, we were done for.” To help the actors become less “sentimental” in their line delivery, Wilson sometimes told the actors to describe the room (“This is a table, the floor is white, this chair is blue”) and then say the next line. Similarly, he would instruct an actor to pretend to be ordering fast food (“I’d like some fries and a coke. . . .”) and then say the next line.

The most frustrating moments for some of the actors occurred when Wilson would say a line the way he wanted it (cold, hard, flat) and have the actor repeat the

line until it sounded right to him. This could go on for ten minutes at a time on a single phrase. After the third or fourth repetition, no observable difference could be heard between what Wilson was doing and what the actor was doing. Afterwards, the actor confessed to being helplessly confused, trying every reading they could think of, hoping something would make him stop. Wilson's statement, "It's how you feel within the form that makes it special," only added to the actors' dilemma. He insisted that despite the specific physical form, the actors could not simply execute the form mechanically. Wilson told the actors to fill themselves one hundred percent with emotion and then control that emotion, sharing only ten percent of the emotion with the audience. Melissa Bowen who played Camille's wife, Lucille, explained how she interpreted this concept: "The emotion is so overwhelmingly powerful in your body, no matter how cold and flat you do your voice the feeling behind it will come through. You don't have to explain to the audience 'this is what I'm feeling.'"

Most actors found it difficult to synthesize Wilson's antinaturalistic statements with the creation of a truthful character from Büchner's emotional script. For some company members, it was only after working alone with Rommen during the first week of the rehearsal period that they realized they were supposed to create a character. Many actors commented that things went much better once this realization occurred. Sparks recalled how he learned to distinguish between Wilson's use of the term "sentimentality" and "emotion": "If the play has good emotion, he says it's tender or poignant. If it's bad emotion, it's sentimental. The more you work with him the more you learn the code words." Chibas played Julie, Danton's wife, who commits suicide. This role was particularly challenging in terms of creating an unsentimental character that still fulfilled Büchner's script. She resolved the dilemma brilliantly, using her "cold" delivery to create a character who was strong and determined in her decision to die, rather than act a clichéd version of the helpless, grief-stricken lover. With intelligence and imagination, Chibas demonstrated the flexibility needed to adapt to Wilson's unique directorial style.

Scott Rabinowitz, who played Danton's friend, Camille, also had a difficult time reconciling Wilson's aesthetic with Büchner's text. In previous work with Wilson on *Hamletmachine*, *Quartet*, and *Salomé*, Rabinowitz had little difficulty being "cold, hard, flat" because the texts of those projects consisted of nonlinear sounds. He found it considerably more difficult to adhere to Wilson's aesthetic to create Büchner's emotional character. Whereas Chibas was able to find a motivation for her "cold" delivery, Rabinowitz had to settle for an uneasy compromise between Büchner and Wilson. Although his performance was strong and consistent, Rabinowitz knew he had succeeded only when he stopped receiving negative notes from Wilson. When asked if he felt he had successfully created a Camille who was not "sentimental," Rabinowitz said, "If I knew the answer to that I could have saved myself weeks of torture and annoyance. I still don't know. I wish I could answer that. You tell me, does it come across as emotional?"

Only Richard Thomas never struggled with the challenge of portraying an emotionally dynamic character in Wilson's play. Thomas never let Wilson's instructions or assigned movements prevent him from creating a truthful character with a large emotional range. Although his work was rarely over the top, he did not hesitate to shout, growl in anger, or display any other emotion that made sense for the

moment. Interestingly, Wilson never gave him the “cold, hard, flat” direction, nor did he have this actor repeat phrases, or recite a laundry list and say his next line. Particularly during the workshop phase, Thomas seemed to be in a completely different performance style than the rest of the cast, roaring and whimpering while other actors gave flat, nonemotional performances. During the rehearsal period, however, this difference in style disappeared as the cast came to match Thomas’s emotional range. After working alone with the actors for the first week of the rehearsal period, Rommen warned the cast that Wilson might pull back some of the “naturalism” that had crept into the actors’ characterizations. This never happened. To the contrary, Wilson himself seemed to change direction. Just as Chibas began to solidify her interpretation of Julie, Wilson told her, with great trepidation, that at the end of the scene where she sends a lock of her hair to Danton, just as the lights are coming down, she should shed one tear. He quickly added that he had never said that to an actor before.

By the time preview week arrived, Wilson noted in an almost confessional manner that the whole production could bear a little more emotion. He was afraid to say this, he admitted, because he was concerned that the cast would take this note too far. Wilson also admitted that he did not quite know how to direct in this vein, that it was foreign territory for him. He added that he was surprised by the way *Danton’s Death* had evolved. He had expected the play to feel like a Magritte painting, but instead the production was more emotional.

Derrah speculated that Wilson’s work with narrative text changed the way he worked with the actors.

In the past, with any question like “What does this mean,” his response was always, “What do you think it means?” But now in this rehearsal process you’re hearing words like “subtext,” like “motivation,” [which is] Stanislavskyan . . . so saying things like “listen to your other actors” – it’s surprising to hear him use terms like that.

Chibas agreed: “I think I’ve told someone that Bob is the ultimate ‘method’ person.” Whatever technique the actors used, connecting to the characters to convey a sense of truth was as necessary while performing in *Danton’s Death* as in any other play. If anything, it may have been more difficult to respond emotionally to the character while remembering which numbered move goes with which word, or while executing physical gestures that were unrelated to text. Similarly, it took more emotional depth, not less, to share only ten percent of the character’s emotional experience and still have the audience respond to that emotion. Even though Wilson articulates his choices, collaborates with the actors regarding both script and character interpretation, creates a polite atmosphere during rehearsals, and employs an assistant director who communicates more clearly than himself with the cast, acting for Wilson requires technique, experience, and skill.

The actor who struggled the most, to the point of stumbling over lines on opening night, Lou Liberatore, had the least experience performing in period style plays that require vocal and physical technique. Although Liberatore, who played Robespierre, was a very experienced actor, having received a Tony nomination for his Broadway performance in *Burn This*, virtually all of his experience was with naturalism, and he did not have conservatory voice and movement training. The role of Robespierre, meanwhile, consisted almost exclusively of long monologues containing anything from political diatribes to philosophical soliloquies. The actor

found it very difficult to progress beyond the flat, monotonous delivery of these speeches, the norm during the workshop phase, even after Wilson urged him to find the different colors in the text and to establish a visceral connection to what he was saying. As Liberatore's anxiety level increased, so did his difficulties in both memorizing his lines and saying them without stumbling. Both Rommen and the vocal coach, Deborah Kinghorn, worked repeatedly with him on text analysis, vocal variety, and finding surprises.

Liberatore never acknowledged that his lack of training or experience with stylized theatre hindered his work with Wilson. To the contrary, he felt the fact he was not classically trained was a help: "I had no opinions of how people should act or walk or talk or any of that stuff . . . I think [Wilson] liked the fact that I was not sullied by Juilliard or Yale or whatever, and I had done nothing but naturalism." The actor blamed his difficulties on other factors including the lack of run-throughs during tech week, the paucity of stop-and-start rehearsals (versus run-throughs with notes), and Wilson's unspoken expectation of performance-level work during rehearsals. The closest Liberatore came to accepting responsibility for his difficulties was the following comment:

A lot of it is how you do homework. And my monologues and me are sort of foreign. I haven't done many of them and I always look at them differently. They always say, "Oh, what an opportunity to be onstage all that time." But I'm like, "Yeah all those words." Maybe I've been in LA for too long or something, but it's just homework and discipline and I don't think I was very good as far as school. I always relied on what I brought into rehearsal and that's where I do most of my work.

It is a coincidence that the actor who had the most difficulty fulfilling Wilson's vision had little formal training of any kind, no intensive voice and movement training, and very little experience outside the realm of naturalism. Indeed, of the twenty-one actors interviewed for this essay, seventeen specifically stated that either their movement training, voice training, style training, or some combination of the above was critical to their ability to perform successfully in Wilson's *Danton's Death*.

In terms of vocal training, Jefferies said that she was able to achieve the "cold, hard, flat" sound while creating interesting vocal surprises because of her vocal training at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Felch credited his success to his training with Cecily Berry. Many of the actors recognized that their dance or movement training helped them achieve the technique needed for Wilson's work. Jefferies and Chibas agreed their yoga practice helped provide the discipline, concentration, and physical awareness necessary to execute Wilson's "form" while being completely connected to their inner selves. Peter Webster and Black, two members of the Alley's acting company who had little formal training, both acknowledged that they had developed their vocal and physical skills by performing in Shakespeare and other classic plays. Webster was particularly emphatic about the necessity of technique in order to perform in a Wilson play:

One of the things I've learned from being through this process is that if you're not a good actor and you're not well trained your deficiencies show up even more sharply. . . . You have to know the range of your voice. . . . You have to know the dynamics of your range. You have to have exquisite speech. . . . You would almost

have to have angels. . . . You'd have to have extremely skilful actors, or people who were so natural that they could be made, not molded, like clear water that is put into many different shaped vessels that are all transparent. . . . I think what he's asking is that you sandpaper yourself so thin that you're still wood, you're still steel, but whatever is inside you comes across. It's very, very difficult. You cannot waste anything. It has to be a high-powered bullet shot by a blind man that hits its mark unerringly. I'm using Zen terms but it's exactly right. You have to have infinite technique to do it.

Sparks also discussed the importance of classical training as preparation for working with Wilson:

If you're not classically trained maybe you're not as aware of your body as another actor . . . maybe you don't go straight to the point of the scene. Maybe you're listening to your voice, or paying attention to your body more than you should. One of the ways classical training helps is you are aware of your fingers, your toes.

Several actors felt that working with other physically-oriented, avant-garde directors helped them understand Wilson's ideas. Weigand, Derrah, Fitzpatrick, and Black talked about working with Anne Bogart. Derrah described the difference between Bogart's and Wilson's approach to movement, saying that Bogart starts with the text and then adds the moves: "You start with emotion and add things to it. And that works OK too, but that system is more traditionally choreographical." Webster and Sparks referred to their work with Tadashi Suzuki. Sparks observed the parallels between working with Tadashi Suzuki and Robert Wilson: "The physical control you have is similar, the tension in the work is similar."

The actors interviewed unanimously agreed that their experience with Wilson would help them in future projects. Several actors commented that they hoped to bring the sheer level of concentration, discipline, and focus demanded by Wilson to future projects. A few actors hoped to preserve their newfound ability to find the "spaces" in the scene, the time between the moments. Several actors felt they had heightened their physical awareness as a result of working with Wilson. Many actors hoped to continue to find interesting nuances in their characters by experimenting with abstract vocalizations and movements that may even seem contradictory to the scene. Most stated that the principles Wilson talked about applied to naturalism as well as to postmodern work. Derrah concluded:

The cardinal rule of acting is not to illustrate. So you learn that to the extreme and it can only help you. If you're doing in opposition to what you're saying or feeling it only makes for a richer layering, even in an O'Neill play or an Odets play or any super-realistic, kitchen-sink drama. You have to do that to be interesting.

Like so many Alley company members, Jeffrey Bean was prepared to dislike working with Wilson. At the end of the project, however, not only was he grateful for the opportunity to perform in *Danton's Death*, he was determined to use the technique he had developed in the future. He explained:

You have in the abstract a freedom to express an inner thought, an idea or a concept about your character which naturalism does not allow. This is so because the gestural language has no relevance to realism. I think I feel much like an ancient Greek actor

hidden behind a mask but using his whole self to express something heightened from the everyday.

There was finally no question among the actors that Wilson's aesthetic demanded accomplished acting technique and that their previous training or experience had prepared them for this project. If the research conducted into Wilson's rehearsal process for *Danton's Death* proves anything, it would be that only those highly skilled in the art of acting can fully realize Wilson's unique vision.

27

ANNA DEAVERE SMITH

Part I: The Word Becomes You

An interview with Carol Martin

[*Editorial note:* due to space limitations, the original interview has been edited. For the complete interview see *TDR* (1993) 37, 4: 45–62.]

Anna Deavere Smith's *Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights Brooklyn and other Identities* is a series of portraits of people enmeshed in the Crown Heights riots where Jews and blacks were so violently pitted against one another, in Brooklyn, August 1991. The riots were provoked when Gavin Cato, a black child, was hit and killed by a Lubavitch rebbe's motorcade. By the end of that day Yankel Rosenbaum, a young Jewish scholar from Australia, was murdered in retaliation. The piece was first performed at the Public Theatre in the late spring and summer of 1992, with Christopher Ashley as director. *Fires in the Mirror* was then mediated for television broadcast by PBS's "American Playhouse," directed by George C. Wolfe. The TV adaptation first aired in April 1993.

In the stage version Smith performed barefoot in a white shirt and black pants. Sitting in an armchair, or at a desk, donning a yarmulke, or a cap of African Kente cloth, or a spangled sweater, Smith brought her 29 subjects to the stage to speak *their own* lines. That there were unresolvable contradictions in the multiple versions of truth Smith portrayed did not diminish the conviction of each character that what they said was true.

Smith's apparently hypernaturalistic mimesis – in which she replicates not only the words of different individuals but their bodily style as well – is deceiving. Derived from a method more documentary than "artistic" in the usual sense, Smith's performance can easily be understood as a feat of technical virtuosity. Brilliantly portrayed characters, however, are not enough to generate the enormous critical success of a work about a very turbulent set of events. The authority of one group over another, of one individual over others, is undermined by the presence of Smith as the person through whom so many voices travel. Smith gives these people the chance to speak as if to each other – in much the same way a "spirit doctor" brings ancestors of other spirits in contact with the living – in the presence of the community of the audience. It is this fictional and yet actual convergence of

presences that gives Smith's work its power. Angela Davis, Nzotake Shange, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Rabbi Shea Hecht, Reverend Al Sharpton, and others, known and unknown, speak together. They speak together across race, history, theory, and differences in their own words through Smith's conjuring performative language. Their "presence" and words mark the absence and silence of the two people around whom the drama revolves, Gavin Cato and Yankel Rosenbaum.

Fires in the Mirror is part of a series of performances titled *On the Road: A Search for American Character*. Smith began working on this series in 1979 by walking up to people on the street and saying "I know an actor who looks like you. If you'll give me an hour of your time, I'll invite you to see yourself performed" (1992: 18). Early in her work Smith's focus shifted from individuals to groups of individuals at gatherings, conferences, or as members of a community. Some of the work has been commissioned and performed for specific conferences, while other pieces were developed for *Bridges Not Walls* (1985); *Gender Bending: On the Road Princeton University* (1989); *On Black Identity and Black Theatre* (1990); *From the Outside Looking In* (1990). Smith's desire is to "capture the personality of a place by attempting to embody its varied population and varied points of view in one person – myself" (Smith 1992: 18).

I spoke with Smith in August 1992 after seeing *Fires in the Mirror* at the Public Theatre.

Martin: How did you become interested in Crown Heights?

Smith: George Wolfe had asked me to participate in a festival of performance artists called "New Voices of Color" last December [1991 at the Public Theatre]. The thought of coming to New York and doing *On the Road* was pretty overwhelming.

Then, on August 19th Crown Heights happened. I put it in the back of my mind. When I went to the Bunting Institute at Harvard in September I still didn't know if the festival was going to happen. It wasn't until the day Anita Hill began to testify that I got a call from the theatre formally inviting me to the festival. I thought I would do a show that I'd already done before and just put a couple of things about New York in it. I asked the Public Theatre for four days in a hotel and a round-trip air ticket. In those four days I had to get everything. I only performed it twice but it went very well so they decided to think of it for a run.

What was personally compelling about Crown Heights was that it was a community with very graphic differences. Everyone wears their beliefs on their bodies – their costumes. You can't pass. Crown Heights is no melting pot and I really respect that.

Martin: You were already dealing with issues of race, identity, and difference.

Smith: Yes.

Martin: How did you make your contacts?

Smith: I usually get a few contacts from the newspaper and then try to make my way into any institution, to somebody in authority. In this case, I went to various people in the mayor's office and asked them for ideas for people to interview. People lead to more people. Eventually, I know very specifically what kind of person I want to meet so I know what kind of person to try to find.

On the Road Series

Anna Deavere Smith

- 1982 *On the Road, New York City*
A Clear Space, New York, NY.
- 1983 *A Birthday Party and Aunt Julia's Shoes* (original poems and
On the Road material)
Ward Nasse Gallery, New York, NY.
- 1984 *Charlayne Hunter Gault*
Ward Nasse Gallery, New York, NY.
- 1985 *Building Bridges Not Walls*
National Conference of Women and the Law, New York, NY.
- 1986 *On the Road: ACT*
Summer Training Congress, American Conservatory Theatre,
San Francisco, CA.
- 1988 *Voices of Bay Area Women*
Phoenix Theatre, San Francisco, CA.
- 1988 *Chlorophyll Post-Modernism and the Mother Goddess: A*
Convers/Ation
Hahn Cosmopolitan Theatre, San Diego, CA.
- 1989 *Gender Bending: On the Road Princeton University*
Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.
- 1990 *Gender Bending: On the Road University of Pennsylvania*
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.
- 1990 *On Black Identity and Black Theatre*
Crossroads Theatre Company, New Brunswick, NJ.
- 1990 *From the Outside Looking In*
Eureka Theatre, San Francisco, CA.
- 1991 *Fragments*
Conference on Intercultural Performance, Bellagio, Italy.
- 1991 *Identities Mirrors and Distortions I*
Calistoga Arts Festival, Calistoga, CA.
- 1991 *Identities Mirrors and Distortions II*
Bay Area Playwrights Festival, San Francisco, CA.
- 1991 *Identities Mirrors and Distortions III*
Global Communities Conference, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.
- 1991 *Identities Mirrors and Distortions IV*
Festival of New Voices, Joseph Papp Public Theatre, New York, NY.
- 1992 *Dream (a workshop)*
Crossroads Theatre Company, New Brunswick, NJ.
- 1992 *Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights Brooklyn and Other*
Identities
Joseph Papp Public Theatre, New York, NY.
- 1993 *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*
Mark Taper Forum, Los Angeles, CA.

Martin: There is a sense in the performance that when you interview blacks they acknowledge you as a member of their community. There's no sense,

however, when you're interviewing the Jews that they looked at you as a member of the black community.

Smith: Could you tell me little bit more?

Martin: There is the use of pronouns like "us" and "we." There is the guy in the restaurant scene who comments about rape of black women and people ending up like you [light-skinned]. There's a sense of inclusion.

Smith: I actually tried to heighten the sense of inclusion for everybody by using the pronouns "us" and "we" in relation to everybody. I address the text like a poem. I work on "us" and "we" whenever anybody, regardless of race, says them. I don't want to confront the audience or make them feel that it's you and me. My experience of the interviews I included was that there was an "us" before I left. People's will to communicate came forward even with Roz, the Jewish woman at the end. She acknowledges me. She says, "I wish you could have been here. I would have showed you the *New York Times*."

It's a fact the Muslim [Conrad Mohammed] calls me "sister". I think everybody else calls me by name.

Martin: One of the things about *Fires in the Mirror* that most moved me was the lack of closure. You didn't attempt to resolve the complications and contradictions of these conversations. There was a continual presentation of diverse people with all their faults and insights. You didn't shy away from some of the qualities of Al Sharpton, for example. The same is true of the characteristics of some of the Jews. At certain moments your portrayal was close enough to caricature to make spectators uncomfortable – close to but not really caricature.

In displaying ethnicity in a slightly magnified way you underscored the humanity of the people you interviewed. Instead of trying to make a cohesive picture, you revealed different landscapes of emotions and histories. I connect this approach to feminist ideas about open-ended narratives, about the refusal of ultimate authority – even though there's an authority operating.

Smith: I think you're right. But the honest truth would be that I've always been like this. Since I was a girl my creative life has been about trying to find a way of being me in my work. I felt very oppressed by the formal structures of theatre, the first one being the role of an acting teacher in a classroom. When I became the acting teacher, there was this expectation that I was going to be this authority who resolved everything and came up with the answers.

The through-line always made me feel bad in teaching, reading, and trying to write plays. It was something inherently I, Anna, was trying to express. Period. If anything opened me intellectually it was when I was trying to write about acting in order to find out why I had trouble with the Stanislavsky technique. I came across a graph of the objectives of the Stanislavsky technique. Super objective. Little objective. It was straight lines with arrows. Quite soon after that I was reading a book about African philosophical systems and saw a picture of a wheel that had all these little spokes with arrows pointing towards the center. I knew then that I wanted to try to find a way of thinking or a structure that was more like that.

As you know, the black church is not only about speaking to one God. The whole thing is supposed to be an occasion to evoke a spirit. This was one of

the things that lead me to thinking in more circular ways and resisting the through-line.

Martin: The lack of closure in *Fires in the Mirror* worked so well because it kept expanding the complexities of the communities and giving us an opportunity to acknowledge that truth, in both the divine and mundane sense, is difficult to discern. Acknowledging this difficulty is a humbling experience that also contains the possibility of acknowledging difference.

Your performing style, not the obvious – that you play both men and women – but the way that you present and characterize people through language and at the same time remain present as Anna also seem informed by feminist ideas. You're not invisible nor do you step aside in a Brechtian way and comment on those you are presenting. You're visible and yet so are all those other people. This palimpsest creates a density and authority in individual characters and, at the same time, calls into question the absoluteness of our differences.

Sometimes we see you obliquely when someone refers to the process of being interviewed. You've formed this difficult material in a very emotional and human way. It must take some struggle, to get to that place, to make those decisions.

Smith: My grandfather told me that if you say a word often enough, it becomes you. I was very interested before I developed this project in how manipulating words has a spiritual power.

I can learn to know who somebody is, not from what they tell me, but from *how* they tell me. This will make an impression on my body and eventually on my psyche. Not that I would understand it but I would feel it. My goal would be to – these kinds of words are funny and probably, in print they sound even worse – become possessed, so to speak, of the person. I don't set out to do anything as intellectual as what you're talking about.

Martin: My observations are from the outside.

Smith: I know that this is there. I've emphasized to my students that acting is becoming the other. To acknowledge the other, you have to acknowledge yourself.

It's not psychological realism. I don't want to own the character and endow the character with my own experience. It's the opposite of that. What has to exist in order to try to allow the other to be is separation between the actor's self and the other.

What I'm ultimately interested in is the struggle. The struggle that the speaker has when he or she speaks to me, the struggle that he or she has to sift through language to come through. Somewhere I'm probably also leaving myself room as a performer to struggle and come through. Richard Schechner talks about this much better than I when he talks about "not me" and "not not me."

Martin: How did you decide to give Carmel Cato the last word? I thought it was right and emotionally difficult at the end of the piece.

Smith: When I first developed *On the Road*, and was learning how to do this, I would ask people for an hour interview and I would talk to them. I'd tell them we could talk about anything. I was looking specifically, not for what they said but for these places where they would struggle with language and come

through. I talked to a linguist about it and she gave me three questions I could ask that would guarantee this would happen.

Martin: What were the questions?

Smith: One of them was: What were the circumstances of your birth? So I end the show with how I began my own exploration. He [Carmel Cato] answers that question. I didn't ask him. I didn't ask him.

Martin: What we are talking about is a concern with language and what language reveals and . . .

Smith: That was the birth of the project ten years ago.

Martin: Language?

Smith: My major fascination in the world.

Martin: You do quote Shakespeare a lot.

Smith: If it hadn't been for Shakespeare, I wouldn't be where I am because it was my Shakespeare teacher who got to me. In the first class we had to take any 14 lines of Shakespeare and say it over and over again to see what happened. So I picked, of all things, Queen Margaret in *Richard III*:

From forth the kennel of thy womb hath crept
A hellhound that doth hunt us all to death.
That dog that had his teeth before his eyes
To worry lambs and lap their gentle blood,
That foul defacer of God's handiwork,
That excellent grand tyrant of the earth
That reigns in galled eyes of weeping souls,
Thy womb let loose to chase us to our graves.

(*Richard III*, IV.4. 47–54)

Right? I knew nothing; it was my first acting class ever and I had some kind of a transcendental experience. I was terrified, I was mystified. For the next three years, as I trained seriously, I never had an experience like that again. Ever. I kept wanting to have it so I kept exploring what language was.

I remembered what my grandfather told me because it's one of those experiences that is so peculiar you have to try to explain it to somebody. What happened to me? Was I crazy? What was it? It sounds really interesting but nobody can name it, so it's your quest.

Martin: No more psychological realism?

Smith: The opposite. Psychological realism is about – this is a real oversimplification of Stanislavsky – saying: Here's Leonard Jeffries. You have to play Leonard Jeffries now. Let's look at Leonard. Let's look at his circumstances. Let's look at your circumstances. How are you two alike? How can you draw from your own experience? Contrary to that, I say this is what Leonard Jeffries said. Don't even write it down. Put on your headphones, repeat what he said. That's all. That's it.

Martin: And what happens as you repeat what he said?

Smith: When dealing with somebody as powerful as Leonard Jeffries with such a fascination with details, I almost didn't have to memorize him. He made a psychic impression, it just went, FOOM! You and I could talk at great length or go into a studio and work on Leonard Jeffries. We'd have a good time figuring out his psychological realities, we'd get a blast, right?

Martin: Maybe.

Smith: That's not the point. The point is simply to repeat it until I begin to feel it and what I begin to feel is his song and that helps me remember more about his body. For example, I remembered he sat up but it wasn't until well into rehearsal that my body began to remember, not me, my body began to remember. He had a way of lifting his soft palate or something. I can't see it because it's happening inside. But the way it played itself out in early performances is that I would yawn, you know, 'cause he yawned at a sort of inappropriate moment [yawns]. I've realized now what is going on. My body begins to do the things that he probably must do inside while he's speaking. I begin to feel that I'm becoming more like him.

Martin: What you're saying in *Fires in the Mirror* is that differences between people are very complicated and maybe unresolvable as well as interesting and wonderful. When you perform, however, you give over to each person in a very deep way and become them.

Smith: In spite of myself. Many of the characters have chiselled away at the gate that's between them and Anna. That's the part that's very fascinating, challenging, difficult, painful. Psychological technique is built on metaphors for a reason. I believe it's quite organic. You listen to some of the characters and you begin to identify with them. Because I'm saying the stuff over and over again every night, part of me is becoming them through repetition – by doing the performance of themselves that they do.

I become the “them” that they present to the world. For all of us, the performance of ourselves has very much to do with the self of ourselves. That's what we're articulating in language and in flesh – something we feel inside as we develop an identity.

These words are knocking at my door and they're saying, “parts of Anna, come out.”

Martin: Where is the spectator in all of this?

Smith: I don't know. I'm just talking about my process. I hope that the words are knocking at their door too.

Anonymous Boy #2

From Anna Deavere Smith's *Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights Brooklyn and Other Identities*

BAD BOY

(The same recreation room as Anonymous Boy #1. He is wearing a black jacket over his clothes. He has a gold tooth. He has some dreadlocks, and a very odd shaped multicoloured hat. He is soft spoken, and has a direct gaze. He seems to be very patient with his explanation.)

That sixteen year old
didn't murder that Jew
For one thing
He played baseball
Right?
He was a athlete

Right?
A bad boy
does
bad things
is
does bad things
only a bad boy could stabbed a man
somebody who
does those type a things
A atha lete
sees people
is interested in
stretchin
exercisin
going to his football games
or his baseball games
He's not interested
in stabbin
people
so
it's not on his mind
to stab
to just jump into somethin
that he has no idea about
and kill a man
Somebody who's groomed in badness
or did badness before
stabbed the man
Because I used to be a atha lete
and I used to be a bad boy
and when I was a atha lete
I was a atha lete
all I thought about was atha lete
I'm not gonna jeoparsize my athleticism
or my career to do the things
that bad people do
And when I became a bad boy
I'm not a atha lete no more
I'm a bad boy
and I'm groomin myself in things that is bad
you understand so
He's a atha lete
he's not a bad boy
It's a big difference
Like
mostly the black youth in Crown Heights have two things to do
either DJ or a bad boy right
You either

DJ be a MC
 rapper
 or Jamaican rapper
 ragamuffin
 or you be a bad boy
 you sell drug and rob people
 What do you do
 I sell drugs
 what do you do I rap
 That's how it is in Crown Heights
 I been living in Crown Heights most a my life
 I know for a fact that that youth
 didn't kill that that that that Jew
 that's between me and my creator

Part II: Acting as Incorporation

Richard Schechner

A woman faces the camera, her voice nasal and New York. Roz Malamud speaks with the kind of accent that sounds “Jewish.” “I wish I could [. . .] go on television. I wanna scream to the whole world. [. . .] I don’t love my neighbors, I don’t know my black neighbors.” A few minutes later television time, Carmel Cato, from the same Crown Heights, Brooklyn, neighborhood as Malamud, but a world away, his voice roundly “black” in its tones, talks through tears about how a car slammed into his daughter, Angela, and his seven-year-old son, Gavin, killing him. “Angela she was on the ground but she was trying to move. Gavin was still. They was trying to pound him. I was trying to explain it was *my* kid!”

These two people – plus many others: men and women, professors and street people, blacks, Jews, rabbis, reverends, lawyers, and politicians – are enacted by Anna Deavere Smith, an African American performer of immense abilities. My concern here will not be with the events in Brooklyn in 1991 and 1992, nor with the “black-white race thing” that continues to torture America, but with Smith’s artwork. I want to investigate how Smith does what she does in *Fires in the Mirror*.

In conventional acting a performer develops a character by reading a play text written before rehearsals begin, improvising situations based on the dramatic situation depicted in the play, and slowly coming to understand the external social situation and the internal emotional state of the character – Hamlet, Hedda Gabler, whoever. The character is a complex fiction created collectively by the actor, the playwright, the director, the scenographer, the costumer, and the musician. The whole team works together to create onstage a believable, if temporary, social world.

Smith works differently. She does not “act” the people you see and listen to in *Fires in the Mirror*. She “incorporates” them. Her way of working is less like that of a conventional Euro-American actor and more like that of African, Native American, and Asian ritualists. Smith works by means of deep mimesis, a process opposite to that of “pretend.” To incorporate means to be possessed by, to open oneself up thoroughly and deeply to another being.

Smith composed *Fires in the Mirror* as a ritual shaman might investigate and heal a diseased or possessed patient. Like a ritualist, Smith consulted the people most closely involved, opening to their intimacy, spending lots of time with them face-to-face. Using both the most contemporary techniques of tape recording and the oldest technique of close looking and listening, Smith went far beyond “interviewing” the participants in the Crown Heights drama. Her text was not a pre-existing literary drama but other human beings. Smith composed *Fires in the Mirror* by confronting in person those most deeply involved – both the famous and the ordinary.

Meeting people face-to-face made it possible for Smith to move like them, sound like them, and allow what they were to enter her own body. This is a dangerous process, a form of shamanism. Some shamans exorcise demons by transforming themselves into various beings – good, bad, dangerous, benign, helpful, destructive. The events of August 1991 revealed that Crown Heights was possessed: by anger, racism, fear, and much misunderstanding. The deaths of Gavin Cato and Yankel Rosenbaum stirred up hatreds. And yet, even in their rage, fear, confusion and partisanship, people of every persuasion and at every level of education and sophistication opened up to Smith. Why?

Because she, like a great shaman – earned the respect of those she talked with by giving them her respect, her focused attention. People are sensitive to such deep listening. Even as a fine painter looks with a penetrating vision, so Smith looks and listens with uncanny empathy. Empathy goes beyond sympathy. Empathy is the ability to allow the other in, to feel what the other is feeling. Smith absorbs the gestures, the tone of voice, the look, the intensity, the moment-by-moment details of a conversation.

But in so doing, she does not destroy the others or parody them. Nor does she lose herself. A shaman who loses herself cannot help others to attain understanding. As spectators we are not fooled into thinking we are really seeing Al Sharpton, Angela Davis, Norman Rosenbaum, or any of the others. Smith’s shamanic invocation is her ability to bring into existence the wondrous “doubling” that marks great performances. This doubling is the simultaneous presence of performance and performed. Because of this doubling Smith’s audiences – consciously perhaps, unconsciously certainly – learn to “let the other in,” to accomplish in their own way what Smith so masterfully achieves.

NOTES

1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. Given the fact that acting/performance is embedded in social processes, Margaret Drewal asserts that “neutrality is an impossibility,” that is, “the point is that performers and scholars alike are engaged in re-presentation, indeed representation – not as mimesis (the visualization of some internal idea or feeling), but rather as transformational process (kinesis) – either to reinforce dominant or established discourses, even if unconsciously, or to contest, resist, and undermine them” (1991: 32).
2. McConachie suggests that an appropriate unit of analysis in theatre history is the “theatrical formation,” that is, “the mutual elaboration over time of historically-specific audience groups and theatre practitioners participating in certain shared patterns of action” (1989: 232). I would suggest that within any theatrical formation there are a number of specific “formations” each of which is focused on a shared pattern of action, that is, in contemporary Euro-American productions there are a design formation, acting/performance formation, directing formation, etc. Specific theatrical formations would each have their own sub-cultural dynamics, that is, the shared patterns and dynamics of a “collective” formation would be quite different from a hierarchically ordered top-down directorial formation, which in turn is quite different from the formation assumed in the traditional Kerala dance-drama *kathakali*, the Japanese *no* theatre, or annual community performances such as those in New Glarus, Wisconsin of Schiller’s *Wilhelm Tell*.

The specific network of relationships which is of concern here, the “acting/performance formation,” is constituted in the mutual elaboration over time of an historically-specific group of practitioners participating in a shared pattern of action elaborated according to a specific paradigm of acting and dramaturgy.

3. See Andrew Apter’s “Open Letter to Theatre Educators” (1992) written on behalf of the Board of Governors in response to the content of scene work presented by college students at the Irene Ryan Award competition for outstanding work in acting. In the scene work presented, “Especially disturbing was the tendency to link sexuality with violence and the consequent objectification of the human body” (1992: 3). The open letter asserts that “the content of the presentations . . . reflects an abrogation of the teacher’s responsibility to encourage students to examine the implications of the scenes on which they are working. In this world of crisis, it is increasingly imperative that we teach as well as train” (1992: 3).

On the theatre’s resistance to non-traditional casting, see Newman (1989).

4. These two sets of assumptions are (sub)culturally, contextually, and genre specific. From a practitioner’s point of view “inside” a system of acting practice, these two sets of assumptions often remain at the periphery of consciousness (if at all) since when one becomes enculturated

into a system of practice it often feels natural. On the other hand, practitioners may choose to challenge these assumptions and contextually-specific limits, violating normative assumptions about the body-in-performance, thereby embarking on the creation of an alternative theory of acting.

5. On genres see McConachie (1989).

2 INTRODUCTION TO PART I

1. For overviews of critical theories and methodologies see Eagleton (1983), Reinelt and Roach (1992), Barry (1995), Carlson (1996), and Fortier (1997). Easthope and McGowan (1992) and Counsell and Wolf (2001) include readings from primary sources and therefore serve as good companion volumes to Eagleton, Reinelt and Roach, Barry, Carlson, and Fortier. For an excellent discussion that bridges the gaps between the dramatic text and performance through a consideration of the nature of action, see Alice Rayner's *To Act, To Do, To Perform* (1994). For earlier, quite reliable if standard histories of acting see, for example, Mullin (1975), Barnett (1977, 1978), and McArthur (1984). Milling and Ley provide a very useful and readable overview of modern theories of performance surveying Stanislavsky, Appia, Craig, Meyerhold, Copeau, Artaud, Grotowski, and Boal (2001).
2. The writings of Herbert Blau (1982a, 1982b, 1992) and Hollis Huston (1984, 1992) are meta-theoretical in a different way – they are philosophical meditations on various aspects of the phenomenon of performance practice, and/or the relationship between performance and thought.
3. I use acting in its broadest sense, based on its root meaning derived from the Latin *actuary*, to mean “a thing done.” The actor is “one who does things” (Partridge 1983: 5). I often use performer and performance interchangeably with actor and acting, recognizing that perform derives from the Latin “*per-*, thoroughly + *fournir*, *fornir*, to complete” (485). An actor/performer is a doer who brings things to completion. Some of my thinking about these issues was stimulated by discussions with anthropologist Peter Claus, at an international conference on performance in Calcutta, India, and with theatre scholar Mark Weinberg. An earlier version of part of this essay was published in 1989(b).
4. Although it would be a serious mistake to collapse ideology into language, an awareness of how an Althusserian notion of ideology saturates language (Turner 1990: 26) is important as we consider how to think and talk about the practice of acting. For further discussions of ideology see Hall (1982), Turner (1990: 197–225), Easthope and McGowan (1992: 41–66), and Eagleton (1991).
5. Although it may appear that I am assuming the subject as a stable identity, this is not so. I will later clarify.
6. For a specific rereading of the scientific, objectivist, positivist language of Sonia Moore's interpretation of Stanislavsky in America, and a critique of its limitations, see Zarrilli (1989b).
7. Drew Leder has reminded us of how Cartesian dualism has shaped our view of the world as arrayed in an “hierarchical opposition” where “women have consistently been associated with the bodily sphere. They have been linked with nature, sexuality, and the passions, whereas men have been identified with the rational mind. This equation implicitly legitimizes structures of domination . . . The same terms can serve to justify class and labor inequities. Lower-class workers are seen as just bodies who must be supervised by management ‘minds.’ . . . Our relation to other cultures has been shaped by much the same logic. Societies more obviously tied to the body and the earth are labeled as primitive and viewed with suspicion. The superior nature

- of Western rationality, with its literate, mathematical. and scientific modes, is all but assumed" (1990: 154).
8. See, for example, Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964, 1968), Levine (1985), Yuasa (1987), Nagatomo (1992a, 1992b). Sheets-Johnstone (1992), Scarry (1991), Turner and Bruner (1986). Jackson (1989), Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Lakoff (1987), Johnson (1987), and Butler (1990). This type of paradigm shift is an example of the general process of shifts discussed by Thomas Kuhn (1962), summarized by Joseph Roach: "Any paradigm has *anomalies*—facts which refuse to fit any theory. As a group of *practitioners* in any field continues its investigations, anomalies tend to proliferate. When such unsolved *puzzles* have multiplied to the point at which they subvert confidence in the paradigm, a *crisis* will develop. If, at this time, there appears to be a competing paradigm which will resolve the anomalies, accounting for more of the known facts, then the old paradigm will collapse and the new one will be adopted" (Roach 1985: 13). Although Kuhn's narrative of breach, crisis, and resolution by replacement is itself modernist and therefore problematic, from a post-modern perspective I would *not* expect there to be a "new" paradigm which will replace the old one, but rather a series of provisional alternatives (practices and narratives).
 9. David Krasner's recent edited volume, *Method Acting Reconsidered* (2000), provides an excellent resource for reconsidering all aspects of the Strasberg and Method legacy. David Cole, in his *Acting as Reading* (1992), calls our attention to the fact that there is a physical dimension to the act of reading itself which is "no less physical than acting itself" (1992: 29). Cole's main argument is that "*acting is the recovery of a 'lost' physical of reading*" (1992: 1; see also 50–136).
 10. For excellent discussions of the dual problems of objectivity and subjectivity see Best (1986) and Lakoff and Johnson (1980).
 11. For the seminal critique of Western projections onto "the Orient," see Said (1978).
 12. For definitions and discussions of postmodernism see Lyotard (1979), Schechner (1982), Hutcheon (1989), Jameson (1991), Birringer (1991), Reinelt and Roach (1992), Counsell and Wolf (2001). Chapter 26 on "Robert Wilson and the Actor" addresses some of the concerns discussed here.
 13. The relevance of the problem of the subject to the making of art is an essential part of contemporary feminist theory and criticism (Butler 1990).
 14. If, as Philip Auslander defines it, deconstruction "is the perception of difference" (Chapter 5), the phenomenon of acting is perhaps one of the most obvious examples of the constant play of difference available to us, an example from which an alternative discourse and method might come. One promising approach would draw on Drew Leder's phenomenological account of the body (1990) which directly addresses deconstruction by focusing on the role of absence in constituting the experience of the body. For Leder the recent attention given to the body and to reestablishing a corporealized existence "can only be understood in relation to the modes of absence inherent in the body" (1990: 3), to the "disappearance of the body." The body can no longer be considered simply as a physical object. It must also be considered as the "lived body" or the "body-as-experiencer." Therefore, the body is simultaneously both "subject and an object available to external gaze" (Leder 1990: 6). The actor, performing in space and through time, perhaps best exemplifies the body's simultaneous deployment as both the object of third-person gaze and the "lived body" of first-person awareness. When concentrated in a particular moment (of acting), one's body seems to "disappear": one is so totally focused in the moment that the body is "absent" at the very moment when spectators might experience it as most "present." Following Peggy Phelan's provocative study of the problem of "the real and representation" (1993), I would prefer to mark this sign of presence with the possibility of its

absence, as (im)material (ir)reality, leaving open to negotiation in the performative moment the particular configuration of the relationship between the actor and the (ir)real.

15. Although speaking of the gendered body, Judith Butler's critique of essentialist concepts of "self" and "identity" is applicable to a discourse of the actor's "presence":

the epistemological paradigm that presumes the priority of the doer to the deed establishes a global and globalizing subject who disavows its own locality as well as the conditions for local intervention . . . Ontology is, thus, not a foundation, but a normative injunction that operates insidiously by installing itself into political discourse as its necessary ground.

(Butler 1990: 148)

This is precisely the question that Auslander addresses at length in Chapter 5.

16. Natalie Crohn Schmitt, in her 1990 discussion of the relationship between twentieth century views of science and acting/performance, illuminates the antipathy between the positivist science admired by Stanislavsky and the Heisenbergian indeterminacy practiced by John Cage and other happenings artists. Crohn also puts Viola Spolin and Joseph Chaikin/the Open Theatre in the Heisenbergian camp. In positivist versions of Stanislavskian acting everything has a reason and is determined; in Heisenbergian performance everything is open to chance.
17. Foregrounding these "shifting perspectives *in performance*" is characteristic not only of many postmodern performances but also of folk performances which allow the playing of multiple voices – especially in opposition to hegemonic monologism.

3 THE ACTOR'S PRESENCE: THREE PHENOMENAL MODES

1. For a thorough examination of Rousseau's complaint against the theatre, see Jacques Derrida (1980) "From/Of the Supplement to the Source: The Theory of Writing," *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 269–316.
2. All quotations are from Peter Handke (1969) *Offending the Audience* in *Kaspar and Other Plays*, trans. Michael Roloff, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
3. Kenneth Burke (1953) *Counter-Statement*, Los Altos, Calif: Hermes Publications. The Burke statement reads: "The hypertrophy of the psychology of information is accompanied by the corresponding atrophy of the psychology of form."

5 "JUST BE YOUR SELF": LOGOCENTRISM AND DIFFERENCE IN PERFORMANCE THEORY

1. For a primary discussion of logocentrism see Derrida (1976) *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 30 ff.
2. See, for example, Jacques Derrida (1982) "Differance" in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 9 ff; Derrida (1981a) "Semiology and Grammatology" in *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 17–36; Derrida (1976) *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 30 ff.
3. In an excellent article on the question of Reconstruction in the theatre, Gerald Rabkin indicates that the director is the primary "deconstructor" of the theatrical text. This stand assumes that we can read the director's concept back through the production elements, including the actor's

performances. If we take Derrida's notion of *differance* seriously, such a perception is impossible: the play of difference which makes up the discourse of theatrical elements will inevitably mediate between the director's concept and what the audience sees (Rabkin 1983: 55 ff).

Derrida's own version of conventional theatre seems to me somewhat naive. He writes that "The stage is theological for as long as its structure, following the entirety of tradition, comports with the following elements: an author-creator who, absent and from afar, is armed with a text and keeps watch over, assembles, regulates the time or the meaning of the representation, letting this latter *represent* him as concerns what is called the content of his thoughts, his intentions, his ideas." This author-creator "enslaves" actors, directors, etc. (1978: 235). As I will try to show here, the theatre remains theological so long as it is logocentric and the *logos* of performance need not take the form of a playwright's or creator's text.

4. See, for example, Keir Elam (1980) *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, London: Methuen, pp. 85–7; and Wilfred Passow (1981) "The Analysis of Theatrical Performance," trans. R. Strauss, *Poetics Today* 2, 3: 244–6.
5. Wiles' suggestion that Stanislavsky's use of a fictional voice to present his ideas makes his system seem more "organic" than it is suggests an interesting avenue for further discussion.
6. Derrida's dismissal of Brecht is unjustifiably and surprisingly abrupt: "Alienation only consecrates . . . the nonparticipation of spectators (and even of directors and actors in the creative act)" (1978: 244).
7. I have been quoting from *Towards a Poor Theater*, published in 1968. Although Grotowski turned his back on performance in 1970 and focused his attention on experiential, para-theatrical events, his work is still founded on self-revelation and still confronts the issues raised in that book. For a comparison of Grotowski's earlier and later work and further discussion of the therapeutic nature of both, see my essay "Holy Theatre and Catharsis," *Theatre Research International* (1984) 9, 1: 16–29.
8. An example of performance criticism which takes the latter approach is Sylvere Lotringer's excellent essay on Mabou Mines, "Shaggy Codes," *Drama Review* (1978) 22, 3: 87–94.

6 THE ACTOR'S EMOTIONS RECONSIDERED

1. Dutch Broadcasting Company *Teleac*, April 1994. After a USA-television production called *Health and Mind*, partly based upon a study at the Theatre Department, Florida State University: *Actors study UCLA* with Dr. Margaret Kemeny, Dr. Nicholas Hall, Dr. Lewis Baxter and Dr. Ann Futterman.
2. Variations occur in the number of acting levels. Most often three levels are discerned (e.g. by States 1983; Quinn 1990), whereas Passow (1992) for instance discovers five acting levels. Including or excluding the spectator in the analysis mostly causes differences in the number of levels. On the level of "the character performed on stage" two different interpretations can be made: the way the actor perceives his performance versus the reception and interpretation of the performed character by the spectator. This paper is written from the viewpoint of the actor.

7 INTRODUCTION TO PART II

1. The most extensive study of the culturally and historically variable assumptions about the body and definitions of science which inform Western acting is that by Roach (1985) *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting*.

2. Feminist theory has also been extremely important in encouraging reconsiderations of the body, as well as discourses and representations of the body. See in particular Butler (1990) and Forte (1992).
3. On Meyerhold see Braun (1969).
4. About this encounter see Zarrilli (1986) and especially Brandon's (1989) more complete history.
5. For well informed scholarly accounts on a few major genres of Asian performance and their acting techniques, reference may be made to the following sources on selected genres: on the training and performance of the *kabuki* actor see Brandon *et al.* (1978) and Dunn and Torigoe (1969). On the training and acting of *nō* and *kyogen* actors, and for translations of Zeami's treatises on acting see Berberich (1984, 1989), Bethe and Brazell (1978, 1982–3, 1990), Brazell (1988), Nearman (1978, 1980, 1981, 1982–3, 1984a, 1984b), Ortolani (1972, 1983, 1984), Raz (1983), Rimer and Yamazaki (1984).

On the training and performance of the *kathakali* actor see Namboodiri (1983) and Zarrilli (1984a, 1987, 1990, 2000a). For a translation of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* see Ghosh (1961, 1967), and for one commentary see Kale (1974). For a general introduction to Indian genres of performance and acting in the traditional and modern Indian theatres see Richmond *et al.* (1990). For a study of acting in the devotional drama tradition see Haberman (1988).

On the training and acting of the traditional Beijing opera performer see Mackerras (1975), Scott (1957, 1983), Wichmann (1991), and Riley (1997).

Note that this selection is somewhat arbitrary and is intended to give the reader a place to begin an exploration of acting techniques in selected Asian genres of performance. For a more complete bibliography see the sections on Asian performance in Fleshman (1986).

6. For a wide variety of arguments and perspectives on various aspects of intercultural performance and problems of translation across cultures see Fischer-Lichte *et al.* (1990), Marranca and Dasgupta (1991), and Scolnicov and Holland (1989). On the controversies surrounding Peter Brook's production and film, *The Mahabharata*, see Dasgupta in Marranca and Dasgupta (1991), Carlson and Pavis in Fischer-Lichte *et al.* (1990), Hildebeitel (1992), and the complete volume edited by Williams (1991).
7. See also Eugenio Barba's (1972, 1990) reflections on the vision of performance provided him by the *kathakali* actor.
8. The positive prospect of intercultural exploration which informs Barba's *Dictionary* is also a potential problem. As a "dictionary" the text appears "open," in its collage-like eclecticism which follows no master narrative and in the interculturalism displayed in its images, examples, and techniques. But the text is one limited to some degree by Barba's discourse of the "secret art of the performer," and the lack of a bibliography which might lead the actor/reader to resources which might further define differences. Even though Barba is clear that his task is not that of cultural or performance anthropologists, given the depth of his knowledge of these fields it would be helpful to point his readers to sources through which they might understand how such "secrets" of performers' arts may, or may not, be considered secrets in some of the cultures of origin.

While I agree with Barba that, for those actors seeking to work on virtuosic extra-daily techniques, it is an important part of a process to discover a means of (using Barba's own term) "dilating" oneself in order to go "beyond technique," to call the relationship to one's technique through which one must pass in order to go beyond the surface of that technique "secret," is to continue to project a mystifying discourse onto the phenomenon of what is beyond.

9. For a discussion of the problems with the (R)real, see Phelan (1993).

10. For a collection of essays on the use of Asian martial arts in American actor training see Zarrilli (1993).
11. Etienne Decroux said, "Underneath the stew pot, there's the flame. That's why it boils. That's why the lid lifts off. There must be something underneath. Whatever one says or does, there's something underneath and that something is work. And work is not agitated movement. It is discipline" (1978a: 23).
12. For one extensive discussion of the breath in Indian psychophysiology as interpreted through Ayurveda and yoga, see Zarrilli (1989a).
13. Among the many recent relevant studies of the complex issue of consciousness relevant to many of the issues raised by performer training and acting see Austin (1998), Bloch (1997), Csikszentmihalyi (1990), and Varela (1991). Similar issues are raised in Bloch et al.'s essay below (Chapter 17).
14. For a further discussion of the issues raised by Bloch and her colleagues, see Bloch and Santibañez-H (1972), Santibañez-H and Bloch (1986), Bloch (1993), and especially the interdisciplinary set of commentaries from a variety of scientists, scholars, and theatre practitioners on the essay included in this volume (Bloch 1988). Bloch (1988) is also an excellent source of further reading on scientific studies of emotional expression and the biological bases of performance. This method of training has become particularly important in the U.S. (see Bloch 1993; Rix 1993, 1998; and Pamela D. Chabora's essay (pp. 229–244) in Krasner 2000).
 Along different but somewhat related lines, one of Eugenio Barba's collaborators, Jean-Marie Pradier (1990) has been working toward developing a "Biological Theory of the Body in Performance." He hypothesizes "that the performing arts, particularly dance and mime, have a sensory-motor stimulation function for the audience" and argues for considering the body in performance in not only its cultural but also its biological context (1990: 93).
15. Bloch and her collaborators go beyond Ekman's more limited attention to expression in the face by establishing that "it is the performance of the respiratory-posture-facial pattern of an emotion that evokes the corresponding subjective activation or feeling in the performer as well as in the observer" (Chapter 15).
16. The training which Bloch and her associates have developed is not dissimilar in intent to the systems of training which Delsarte and Meyerhold developed which were to be a systematic means through which emotional expression might be actualized as the actor worked from the outside inward. According to a Jamesian theory of emotions, physical changes in posture etc. automatically trigger an emotional response.

8 AN AMULET MADE OF MEMORY: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EXERCISES IN THE ACTOR'S DRAMATURGY

1. These reflections derive from the work of the ninth ISTA session (Umeaa, Sweden, May 1995), whose theme was "Form and Information: Performer's Learning in a Multicultural Dimension."
2. For an explanation of this term, defining a particular use of scenic energy by performers, see Barba (1995: 55–61).

9 MEYERHOLD'S BIOMECHANICS

1. The author would like to thank Stella Hamerslag, Daniel Gerould, Bernard Koten, Aimee Su, and M. S. Ivanova for their invaluable assistance.

11 ACTOR TRAINING IN THE NEUTRAL MASK

1. This and subsequent quotations of Lacoq are taken from notes of an interview by Sears Eldredge, trans. Fay Lacoq, in Eldredge, "Masks: Their Use and Effectiveness in Actor Training Programs," Diss. Michigan State University, 1975. [Editor's note: see also LeCoq 2000.]

12 BALI AND GROTOWSKI

1. In Balinese theatre, in addition to physical positions and their execution (*wiraga*), such as *agem*, there are two other elements that complete the effectiveness of acting work onstage. These are: *wirasa*, the feeling of what is being performed; and *wirama*, the musicality of the acting. For the purposes of this article, discussion of these two elements is not necessary.
2. Ed. note: for a full discussion of the "three brain" concept – reptilian, old mammalian, and new mammalian – and the relation to trance and other kinds of performance, see Turner (1983, reprinted in Turner 1986). Possibly Grotowski was aware of Turner's writing on this subject. On *kundalini* see Zarrilli 2000b:123ff.

14 MY BODIES: THE PERFORMER IN WEST JAVA

1. Some may question my ability to analyze this system without letting preconceptions from my own background and training color the study. To an extent these factors will intervene. If they did not exist, I would not be trying to articulate these ideas for the readers of this essay. My argument, however, is that the system reprograms the body/mind of the student without attention to the personality that the trainee brings to it. Though my reprogramming may be more extensive and is augmented by exposure to dance systems of a wider area of the Pacific Rim, I feel that my body is still open to the meanings of the practice in itself. Indeed, practice is the only way to get beyond the simple introductions that are found in books and the fragmented, albeit tantalizing information about meanings that come from performers. Because principles of *ilmu gaib* (secret mystical knowledge) and *kabatinan* (spiritual practice) are involved with most traditional performance, the conversations that surround verbalizations about it are charged. If a teacher teaches wrongly, it can cause dispersal of his or her own store of spiritual power, or even worse, sickness or bad luck. If the teacher speaks and students have not already intuited through doing the ideas that the teacher articulates, they cannot understand what is being taught. Most performers say their teachers gave them little direct explanation of mantras or movements. Explanations are considered dilutions of the real thing – the doing. I invite performers to test my hypotheses by exploring the performance practices of West Java – while acknowledging that other performers would not necessarily concur with all of my interpretations.
2. Two major cultural groups exist and continue to influence each other's arts in West Java. The highland areas are comprised of Sundanese speakers who, starting two hundred years ago,

borrowed many things from the north coastal area where Javanese speakers predominate. The major borrowings have been from the region of the old kingdom of Cirebon, where the arts remain distinct from those of the better-known Central Javanese kingdoms of Solo and Yogyakarta. The generalizations I make about stylization and distancing apply to the performances of both the Sundanese and Cirebon areas.

3. The importance of the solo dancer/puppeteer role is probably related to the shamanlike power needed for exorcistic performances, called *ruwatan* (see Foley 1984). To do these rituals a performer must have spiritual power which is thought to be acquired with difficulty, and, once acquired, best kept at some distance from the spiritual power of another lest the other create a kind of spiritual static, interfering with the first's power/performance. Such circumstances may have contributed to the preference for solo performers.
4. This is true of the mask and puppet theatre of West Java, but in theatre by humans (*wayang orang*) and dance dramas (*sendratari*), specialization is evident in performance practice – not in the training – which requires all performers to master the full cycle of characters. Human theatre has grown up in West Java during the current century.
5. I will use the example and borrow related material from the *wayang golek cepak*, the 200-year-old Sundanese puppet theatre which derives from the Cirebon region where masks and puppetry are closely interrelated and are traditionally the purview of a single artist. The same mask/puppet/character types are common to virtually all theatre forms of the Sundanese, Javanese, and Madurese language areas, implying that the progression of four or five character types was basic to all of these ethnic groups. Indeed, a related grouping of four prime characters exists in other Southeast Asian areas, including Bali, Java, Malaysia, Thailand and Cambodia.
6. The topeng is today danced either during the day or at night. Most performers specialize only in mask performance. Some *dalang*, such as those of Losari, still do puppet or masked dance drama performances in addition to mask dance performances. The oral tradition indicates that this was more common in the past.
7. Kalijaga and other Islamic mystics may indeed have reordered the traditional arts of the Hindu-Javanese heritage in this period, but the roots of these practices are probably part of the archaic heritage of the Malayo-Polynesians that inhabited the archipelago even earlier. Though the structure that we see today may have been set when Kalijaga lived, the dance has changed since his time. For example, the dancer today wears a neck ornament distinctly like a European tie and one of the characters wears a starched collar, remarkably like one appropriate to a European shirt of the early part of this century.
8. There is no term that dancers in Indonesia use to refer to this concept. I reiterate that those who learn this system learn by rote and, hence, would not necessarily analyze the body usage verbally, as I do here.
9. The mask dancer of topeng does not speak since the mask is held to the face by biting a piece of leather attached to the inside of the mask. My comments on voice, therefore, are drawn from the practice of the rod puppet theatre. In masked performances, the clown performer or a musician of the *gamelan* speaks for the character using a voice which replicates the puppet theatre's vocal conventions.
10. As is customary in Indonesia, the opposite is sometimes true, too. The Pamindo character is sometimes said to be male – in Losan this mask is used for Panji and in some places it is called Samba, after a son of Kresna. However, most performers think of Pamindo as female; it is significant that females in dance plays and puppet presentations correspond in movement and appearance to the Panji or Pamindo character types.
11. Reverence for the hornbill and the frigate bird, as old religious figures in various areas of the

Pacific including Micronesia, and the tendency to enact the movements of this bird in dance may be related (see Holt 1967: 106; Xavier 1976: 45–7).

12. Also known as Rawana, Dasamuka is the king of Alengka. Pancasona is a power acquired by Dasamuka which let him live again each time he touched the earth.
13. This character, who uses fully visible energy, is presented most routinely for Western audiences. The explosions of emotion that we have come to expect in performance, the wide use of the space, jumps, and the high physical center found in ballet are closer to Klana than to any of the other characters.
14. Puppet plays such as *Arjuna's Meditation* may corroborate the importance of the upper spine area in the dance of Klana. Nirwatakawaka, whose type (puppet mask) is identical to Klana, has a secret power located at the back of his throat which allows him to live forever. It seems possible to me that the narratives of such plays, when reaffirmed by the practice of dance, may be referring to characteristics of the human neural system.
15. Shelly Errington (1990) notes that terms such as "natural" mask are actually deep cultural choices. In Indonesia, what a Westerner might call "natural" (deeply felt, emotionally fraught, a pouring forth of sound or energy), fits better into the category of "demonic" or "ogrely" and is therefore considered by Indonesians most unnatural.
16. The *shintren*, a village trance dancer of the Cirebon region, is said to be possessed by a goddess (*bidadari*) who descends from the heavens. Her dance exhibits an energy use which is analogous to the refined aspects of topeng (see Foley 1985).
17. It seems likely that the snake association is related to the use of reptiles in Micronesian dances where iguana or lizard dances stand in marked contrast to frigate bird movements. The contrast seems analogous to the bird-snake dichotomy and may be an adaptation of the same thinking to the changing ecology of the Pacific Islands.
18. Even if it seems that the varied sexual responses of the two genders present some analogy – the relaxed, floating Pamindo (female) and excited, driving Klana (male) – indigenous commentary denies this analysis. Indeed, each character is ideologically linked with the opposite of what this sexual interpretation would indicate. The red Klanamask, while always representing a male in stories and puppet plays, is said to indicate the female's menses, and the white mask of the refined character, closer to females in stories and puppet plays, is associated with semen.
19. I think it likely that topeng masks are related to Japanese *nō* which also has a range of masks from god to demon. Possibly much of the imagery traveled with Hindu-Buddhism to the archipelago. Zarrilli's (1989a; 2000b) discussion of the rising vital power in Indian martial arts and the kundalini yoga's awakening of the serpent power to seek liberation, a state beyond death, illness and worldly care, also seems related. I suspect however that the imagery (bird/serpent, world tree) and the basics of the typology of character preceded Indian influence in this area and was merely reconfirmed and reinterpreted by it. Thus it may stem from common thinking about the body that predated the Hindu impact in Indonesia beginning about the first century, and was merely elaborated during the Hindu-Javanese period before being reformulated by Sufi thinkers in the sixteenth century. It has been reworked by many generations of dalang since.
20. For recent discussions of ideas of power in Southeast Asia see Errington (1990); Keeler (1987); and Zurbuchen (1987: 46–7).

15 "ON THE EDGE OF A BREATH, LOOKING"

1. The final version of this essay has been inspired, in part, by some of Herbert Blau's writings, especially *Take Up the Bodies* (1982a: 86) from which the title is taken.
2. Such undisciplined energy is not peculiar to American actors. Zeami compares the undisciplined but vibrant energy of the young actor to that of the tree squirrel – exciting but unfocused and uncontrolled (Nearman 1980). There seem to be no cultural barriers to such indiscipline.
3. Although I now am permanently based in the U.K. where I run a private studio (Tyn-y-parc C.V.N. Kalari/Studio in Wales) and teach (University of Exeter), the working methods and techniques discussed here were first developed between 1980 and 1999 when director of the Asian/Experimental Theatre Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison founded by Scott in 1963. In 1979 Scott invited me to join him for a transition year before his retirement so that I could learn the training system he had evolved, incorporate my own techniques into the training system, and assume in 1980 direction of the Asian/Experimental Theatre Program. Since my own field work and practical training had been in South Asia, I integrated Scott's own exercises and the short-form Wu style *t'ai chi ch'uan* with *kalarippayattu* and selected yoga exercises. Scott published widely on the theatres of China and Japan, and is especially noted for his understanding of traditional Chinese acting (1955, 1957, 1967, 1969, 1975, 1983). Unfortunately, his visionary practical work of training and directing actors is little known except to his students. Scott himself had learned *taijiquan* as a personal discipline and as a means of understanding the "basic working principles" of the Chinese actor's stage technique and presence.
4. In contemporary Euro-American theatre, at least four primary paradigms of acting/performance are currently operative: (1) playing a character in which it is assumed that the actor must craft, shape, and embody an identifiable role, "mask" or *dramatic persona* played in a particular style and according to a set of conventions (melodrama, realism, etc.); (2) an Artaudian/Grotowskian type of acting in which the actor/performer does not attempt to construct a character as a separate *dramatic persona*, but rather plays each moment in a psychophysiological score without the intercession of character, and/or improvises each moment (Spolin 1963); (3) a Brechtian based acting in which the actor displays the character by being an observer to his or her own actions while in the act of performing them; and (4) a performance in which the performer repeats a sequence of actions which does not constitute a character.

There is, of course, free play between and among these paradigms. John Rouse's description of the Wooster Group's performance of *LSD* (. . . *Just the High Points* . . .) is a case in point as he differentiates between the psychologically realistic style of acting required of a "normative" production of Miller's *The Crucible* in which each actor plays a character, and the type of acting in which the Wooster Group's actors engaged: "Lines were delivered at a frantic pace, sometimes at high volume. During Miller's scenes of hallucination and hysteria some performers displayed a highly theatricalized mania, some crawled under the table. But the acting made no attempt at psychological realism. The characters were displayed, not embodied" (1992: 150).

Joseph Chaikin sought to erase stereotypical characterization as an unnecessary intermediary between the actor and the immediacy of the performative moment. He announced that "The study of character is the study of 'I' in relation to the forces that join us, [that is] . . . The notion of characterization as understood in our American theater is archaic and belongs with the whole hung-up attitude about the 'other.' Characterization formerly has been simply a set of mannerisms which disguise the actor and lend atmosphere" (1972: 11, 17).

All the above paradigms assume a psychophysiological "ready" performer capable of fully embodying the specific tasks required of the performer. This discussion is about preparing performers to be able to engage any/all of these paradigms.

5. My representation of this experience as taking place between cultures is not ideologically unproblematic. My own search for “useful” techniques that first took me to India, and which led to a “transformation,” to a certain degree follows the now classic pattern of the Westerner traveling to the East for “enlightenment” – a pattern which I have critiqued elsewhere. The difference, if there is one, lies in my reflexive attention to the problems and ideology of the encounter. Also, I firmly believe that a similar experience and result to those described here might just as well have occurred for me had I gone to France and studied Corporeal Mime in 1976–7 instead of going to India.

As Vasudha Dalmia-Luderitz points out, this narrative could be critiqued as yet another “attempt to come to terms with the urban, post-industrial . . . search for the Asiatic within, whereby the difference, often consisting of all that has been marginalized in one’s own culture, is projected onto the other, often preempting thereby any real effort to understand and represent with any degree of responsibility the cultural reference thus invoked” (1992: 9–10). To temper this sobering criticism, I refer the reader to my other attempts responsibly to understand and represent what are the primary cultural referents of this study, that is, *kalarippayattu* and *kathakali* of Kerala (see in particular Zarrilli 1984a, 1989a, 1992, 2000a, 2000b).

6. I returned for more advanced training under Govindankutty Nayar in 1980, 1983, 1985, 1988, 1989, and 1993, 1995, 1998. Gurukkal Govindankutty Nayar gave me permission to teach what I had learned as early as 1977. In 1989 I also studied with C. Mohammed Sherif and Sreejayan Gurukkal at the Kerala Kalarippayattu Academy, Kannur. In 1989 I also began training in yoga with Chandran Gunukkal of Azhicode, Kannur District, and in 1993 I continued yoga training with Dhayanidhi in Thiruvananthapuram. In 1988 I was gifted a *pitham* (traditional stool representing past masters) by Gurukkal Govindankutty Nayar.
7. I remind the reader that *kathakali* actors are as prone to undiscipline as are Americans and *nō* actors. I witnessed a performance of three *kathakali* plays on 19 February 1993, in celebration of Sivaratri at the Siva temple near Wadakancherry, Kerala, South India. In the first play of the night, *Nala Caritam* (First Day’s Play), one of the most renowned of today’s master actors, Kalamandalam Gopi Asan, was performing the title role of Nala opposite his somewhat junior counterpart, my former teacher M.P. Sankaran Namboodiri – an actor just beginning to reach his performative potential – in the role of Hamsa. While Namboodiri gave a rich, complex, full performance of his role, Gopi was criticized by connoisseurs in attendance for his overacting in the opening scenes of the play, that is, an illustration of his occasional “undisciplined” if sometimes brilliant powers of interpretation and expression. In the second play of the night, senior actor Padmanabhan Nayar Asan played the title role of the demon-king Narakasura in *Narakasura Vadham*, and, like Namboodiri’s performance, exhibited that supremely *kathakali*-esque “total” engagement and control of the entire bodymind in filling out each dramatic moment and image in the text – performances in which the text is corporeally inscribed in the actor’s body. The third and final story of the night was a performance of *Kiratam* featuring junior teachers and actors. From my critical perspective, the performance of *Kiratam* was a disaster. In contrast to the performance of Namboodiri and Padmanabhan Asan, the younger actors were, to use the same terms I might use for bad acting in the United States, never “in the moment,” that is, they were “anticipating” the next beat of their score. They were “overacting” and playing to the gallery. For example, the actors playing Arjuna and Siva in disguise as a hunter – two epic characters who most represent and embody the disciplining self-control of the yogic strain of Indian philosophy, cosmology, and embodied practice – were totally out of control, going so far in their frenzied battle with one another as to pick up and use the wooden stools onstage as “weapons” with which to attack one another!

8. Although certainly characteristic of American male sports, this willful, aggressive, assertive approach to one's body-in-training is not restricted to Americans. Many Malayali males undergoing training suffer the same problems I have recounted here, with the same results – unnecessary tension.
9. Scott had the foresight to insist, even in a University setting where classes usually meet only one, two, or three times per week, that this psychophysiological training regime *had to be repeated daily* if it were to be of potential benefit to students.
10. As of 2001, I offer the training as a year-long process of immersion for B.A. (2nd year) and M.A. Theatre Practice (Physical Performance) students at the University of Exeter. During the course of the year of study, the training is applied to a collective production project which I direct, and then to individual process/practice.
11. For *kalarippayattu* practitioners the lower abdominal/pelvic region is known as the "root of the navel" (*nabhi mula*) – the place to and from which the breath travels. For a full discussion of the indigenous concepts, see Zarrilli (1989a).
12. Although the seven phases Schechner identifies are based on a contemporary Western experimental model of theatre and therefore could be considered problematic if assumed as a universal progression for all performances, it is a useful place to begin this discussion of training toward (workshops, rehearsals, warm-ups) performance for many Euro-American actors.
13. Japanese philosopher Yasuo Yuasa explains how non-Western philosophical systems and their related disciplines of practice have long recognized that "the mind-body issue is not simply a theoretical speculation but it is originally a practical, lived experience (*taiken*), involving the mustering of one's whole mind and body. The theoretical is only a reflection of this lived experience" (1987: 18). Yuasa argues that, except for the phenomenological movement, the Western philosophical tradition has always asked, "What is the relationship between the mind-body?" In contrast, Eastern body-mind theories begin by asking, "How does the relationship between the mind and body *come to be* (through cultivation)? or What does it *become*?" (1987: 18). For an additional discussion of the importance of understanding performance itself as a process, see Drewal (1991).
14. In this selective presentation of Artaud's vision of the actor, I have abstracted his incisive description of the psychophysiological basis of the actor's art from his metaphysical speculations. Unfortunately, Artaud too often wedded the physiological with the mystical and cosmological.
15. There is a striking similarity between Bloch's description of her techniques and results (Chapter 17) and those of *kathakali*.
16. In April, 2000, Patricia Boyette, Peadar Kirk and I opened THE BECKETT PROJECT at the Grove Theatre Center, Los Angeles. The evening included: *Ohio Impromptu* (Zarrilli as Reader; Kirk as Listener), *Not I* (Boyette as Mouth directed by Zarrilli), *Act Without Words I* (Zarrilli directed by Kirk), and *Rockaby* (Boyette directed by Zarrilli/Boyette). THE BECKETT PROJECT toured five venues in the U.K. in 2001. Patricia Boyette received an award for "best actress" for her performances in the L.A. production and the theatre received an award for "courageous producing."
17. The 1995 performance was with the Asian-Experimental Theatre Program, and the second in 1999 with Theatre Asou (Graz, Austria).
18. I have directed two productions of *The Water Station* – the first in 1998 with the Asian Experimental Theatre Program, and the second in 2000 at the University of Exeter. In 2001 I devised a physical theatre performance with a very international group of post-graduate Physical Performance and 2nd year students at the University of Exeter entitled "*Eftermaele*:"

that which is said after” – a project in which actors worked with sustaining physicalized images over extended periods of time, and/or shifted from one image to another.

16 THE GARDZIENCE THEATRE ASSOCIATION OF POLAND

1. From Staniewski's so-called "Memorial Statement," written in Lublin in 1990 and 1991, distributed privately. Parts of this were published in *New Theatre Quarterly* (1992). The section quoted from is unpublished.

17 EFFECTOR PATTERNS OF BASIC EMOTIONS

1. The experiments described here and the development of the training method were done between 1971 and 1973 in Santiago, Chile, where the authors (S.B. and G.S.H.) worked at the Department of Physiology of the Medical School and at the Department of Psychology (Universidad de Chile). Pedro Orthous (deceased in 1974) was Regisseur and Professor of Dramatic Art at the Drama Department of the Universidad de Chile. Without his participation in this research, the first applications of the reported method to theatre performance would not have been possible.

We are greatly indebted to Elena Berger for conducting the yoga and relaxation exercises and to Horacio Munoz-Orellana, a Chilean regisseur resident in Denmark, for many enriching discussions and for the development of new theatrical exercises in his current work with this method. And last but not least is our grateful recognition of the many actors and students from different countries who were open to our ideas and who were willing to participate in the experiments.

A partial report of this work was given at the International Colloquium on "Theatre et sciences de la vie" in Paris, France, 4–6 June 1984.

18 INTRODUCTION TO PART III

1. Of the numerous recent books published on techniques for training actors which do not focus on the method, see, for example Balk (1985), Gronbeck-Tedesco (1992), Sonenberg (1996), Dixon and Smith (1995).
2. On the historical Stanislavsky see his own books (1948, 1958, 1963), as well as Benedetti (1982), Houghton (1936), Gordon (1987), and Mitter (1992). For re-readings of Stanislavsky which historicize and contextualize his ideas see Rayner (1985), Schmitt (1986, 1990), Hobgood (1991), Carnicke (1993, 1998), and Merlin (2001). On Michael Chekhov see the most recent edition of his seminal text on acting with Mel Gordon's useful introduction (1991).

On Strasberg and various versions of American method acting see Krasner (2000), Hethmon (1965), Moore (1960, 1965, 1979), Kazan *et al.* (1984), and Munk (1966). See also the two special issues of the *Drama Review* (Fall, Winter, 1964) on Stanislavsky and Stanislavsky's legacy in America. For re-readings of American method acting see Carnicke's (1984, 1993, 1998) critiques of the problems with translations of Stanislavsky's texts on the basis of which many ideas of American method acting were formulated, and Benedetti's new translation of Stanislavsky (Stanislavsky 1993).

3. On Brecht and acting see also McDowell (1976), Hernadi (1976), and Esslin (1990).
4. On Fo see also Mitchell (1984) and Fo (1987, 1992). For other more general studies of comedy clowning, and politics see Jenkins (1988) and Schechner (1985).
5. For additional information on Boal see Boal (1990, 1992), the special *TDR* issue on Boal (1990: 34, 3), and Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz (1994). Boal's model of the actor as enabler has also been usefully developed and employed in British style theatre-in-education and British style educational drama. On theatre-in-education see Jackson (1980, 1993), O'Toole (1976), Redington (1983), and Vine (1993).
6. From their interviews with numerous feminist theatre workers, Jenkins and Ogden-Malouf found few who worked "with realistic material in a strictly iconic fashion, because the performer in realism is unable to transcend gender boundaries" (1985: 66). They also reported Betty Bernhard's observation that socialization in American culture creates male actors who must work through layers of defenses in order to gain access to their emotional resources (thus the great popularity of Method-oriented approaches) and female actors who must overcome scores of self-effacing habits in order to gain presence and claim focus on the stage (for which little acting pedagogy exists) (Jenkins and Ogden-Malouf 1985: 68).
7. For other important contributions to feminist considerations of acting see Brunner's (1980) interview with Sklar, Zeig (1985), Blair (1985), Forte (1992), Keyssar (1996).
8. For further reading on acting Beckett see Kalb (1989), Zarrilli (1997).

19 BRECHT AND THE CONTRADICTION ACTOR

1. For a recent example of this absolutizing tendency, see Timothy J. Wiles, discussion of Brecht in his *The Theater Event: Modern Theories of Performance*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. The tendency towards generalized comparisons with Stanislavsky mars one of the most recent contributions to the discussion of Brecht and the actor, Margaret Eddershaw's otherwise frequently interesting examination, "Acting Methods: Brecht and Stanislavski," in *Brecht in Perspective*, Graham Bartram and Anthony Wayne (eds), New York, Longman, 1982: pp. 128–44.
2. Brecht, in a discussion with students and professors at the Universität Greifswald, 1954, "Über die Arbeit am Berliner Ensemble," in Werner Hecht (ed.) *Brecht im Gespräch, Diskussionen, Dialogue, Interviews*, edition suhrkamp 771, Frankfurt/Main, Suhrkamp, 1975, p. 123. All translations in the essay are the author's.
3. Today, over thirty-five years after Brecht's death, such invaluable discussion based on rehearsal observation is virtually impossible to come by. However, a monograph now being prepared by John Fuegi for Cambridge University Press's Directors in Perspective series promises to provide us with further detailed accounts of Brecht's work with his actors. Fuegi has had access to Brecht's co-workers, to tape recordings and notes of rehearsals, and to his own vast knowledge and experience of Brecht's theatre.
4. On the other hand, concentration on Brecht's work with actors at the Ensemble precludes consideration of such aspects of his work as the interrelationship of theory and practice during the late 1920s when Brecht was evolving his theory of the *Lehrstücke*, the Learning Plays.
5. Given the fairly widespread misconception represented by Eddershaw's statement that Brecht founded the Berliner Ensemble "primarily to facilitate the perfect staging of Brecht's own plays" (137), it should be stressed that Brecht and his actors developed their interest in interpretational techniques for the full range of the world's dramatic literature, from Sophocles'

Antigone to Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*. Of the Ensemble's fifteen most important productions during Brecht's lifetime, only four were plays by Brecht.

6. "Anmerkungen zur Aufführung 1949"; reprinted in *Materialien zu Brechts Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*, ed. Werner Hecht, edition suhrkamp 50, 10th edn 1976, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1964. I have altered the format of this list which is printed in paragraph form, the individual sentences being separated by ellipsis points.
7. Roland Barthes provides an excellent discussion of the dialectical development of beats in the first scene of *Mother Courage*, using photographic illustrations, in his "Seven Photo Models of Mother Courage," trans. Hella Freud Bernays, *Drama Review*: 1967, 12, 1: pp. 44–55.
8. Palitzsch in an interview with Artur Joseph for his *Theater unter vier Augen: Gespräche mit Prominenten*, Köln, Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1969, p. 178.
9. For further discussion on Brecht's use of "quoted" gestures throughout a production, see Walter Benjamin's *Versuche über Brecht*, edition suhrkamp 172, 2nd edn, Frankfurt/Main, Suhrkamp, pp. 26–7.
10. Käthe Rüllicke-Weiler points this out in *Die Dramaturgie Brechts: Theater als Mittel der Veränderung*, 2nd edn, Berlin, Henschel, 1968, p. 206.
11. Brecht, as reported by Hans Joachim Bunge, "Über eine Neuinszenierung der Dreigroschenoper: Ein Gespräch zwischen Brecht und Giorgio Strehler am 15.10.1955 über die bevorstehende Mailänder Inszenierung," in Siegfried Unseld (ed.) *Bertolt Brecht Dreigroschenbuch: Texte, Materialien, Dokumente*, Frankfurt/Main, Suhrkamp, 1960, p. 134.
12. See Brecht's description, "Anmerkungen zur Aufführung 1949," *Materialien*, p. 76.
13. The *Gesammelte Werke* misprints "Stadium" (stage) for "Studium" (study).
14. Käthe Rüllicke-Weiler in *Sinn und Form*, 2nd Special Brecht Issue, 1956, as quoted by Albrecht Schöne, "Bertolt Brecht: Theatertheorie und dramatische Dichtung," in Theo Buck (ed.) *Zu Bertolt Brecht Parabel und episches Theater*, LGW Interpretation 41, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1979, p. 39.
15. This labeling of Brecht's second and third phases is Peter Palitzsch's, as quoted by Hans Daiber, *Deutsches Theater seit 1945*, Stuttgart, Reklam, 1976, p. 218.
16. See Herbert Blau, "The Popular, the Absurd and the *Entente Cordiale*," *Tulane Drama Review*, 5, 3 (1961): 121.
17. Brecht's productions are, of course, famous for rehearsal periods lasting six months or longer. As Peter Palitzsch has pointed out in a personal interview (3 March 1979), however, Brecht's early productions at the Ensemble were often worked up relatively quickly; the *Hohmeister* had only about nine weeks of rehearsal, for example. Brecht began to indulge in long rehearsal periods during his last years, when he was both very ill and intent on developing his young directors and actors. The issue is not whether a Brechtian approach needs six months of rehearsals, but that it needs as long as necessary to proceed effectively through Brecht's three phases.

20 DARIO FO: THE ROAR OF THE CLOWN

1. This work with Dario Fo was supported by a Sheldon Fellowship from Harvard University.

21 FORUM THEATRE

1. Now [1991] I have been involved in several hundred such performances, in dozens of countries; most recently, the Theatre of the Oppressed Encounter at Massy in Paris (March-April 1991) brought together more than twenty Theatre of the Oppressed groups, practicing the method in seventeen countries.
2. For Newspaper Theatre, see Augusto Boal (1985) *The Theatre of the Oppressed*.
3. Since writing this in 1978, I have done a number of experiments of this nature in many countries. I have even directed Bertolt Brecht's *The Jewish Wife* and played it in a Forum session in Paris in 1984. Similarly, Sophocles' *Antigone* has been done as a piece of Forum Theatre in Lausanne, Switzerland.

22 RESISTING THE "ORGANIC": A FEMINIST ACTOR'S APPROACH

1. *Much* of my training focused on method acting technique, not all. I attribute my "anti-organic" impulses to my work as an apprentice at Milwaukee's Theatre X, and to the Asian theatre discipline which lured me to the University of Wisconsin-Madison's graduate program (Chapter 14). The productions at Theatre X were decidedly non-realistic, and the training in the Asian theatre program focused on external-to-internal approaches to acting. Through that rigorous physical regimen, which involved the conscious intellectual/emotional "filling up" of codified forms, I became aware of my body as it is presented to produce meaning to an audience. I am convinced that in the absence of such training and its adjunct philosophies as well as a healthy dose of materialist feminist theory in my "academic" graduate courses, I would not have reconsidered the organic approach.
2. In my experience theatre practitioners, regardless of their approaches, understand that, though they may muster every bit of their coercive creative might, no two members of an audience will understand their message in the same way, and certainly not in the way they intended. Feminists have also begun to theorize in the areas of semiotics and reception which should help theatre practitioners to broaden their scope when shaping their work.

24 TASK AND VISION

1. All quotations in this essay are from an interview with Willem Dafoe.

26 ROBERT WILSON AND THE ACTOR: PERFORMING IN *DANTON'S DEATH*

1. The author wishes to thank the Alley theatre and Robert Wilson for permission to observe rehearsals of *Danton's Death*; Michael Wilson for writing in support of a leave of absence to complete this project; the actors who agreed to be interviewed; and Judith Zivanovic, Harold Nichols, and Jim Symons for their help on this article.
2. See Laurence Shyer for a good general introduction to Robert Wilson's working process and aesthetic.
3. Robert Auletta created a new translation of *Danton's Death* for this production. Auletta was also present at many of the early rehearsals in order to refine the adaptation. References to the play in this article are based on the 1992 copyrighted working script for the Alley Theatre production.

4. Robert Wilson, comments during rehearsals for the workshop and rehearsals of *Danton's Death*, June, Sept., and Oct. 1992. Subsequent quotes and paraphrases from Wilson are based on written notes taken by the author during rehearsal.

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Videography

- Les Deux Voyages de Jacques Lecoq* with English subtitles. Produced by Jean Noel Roy and Jenn-Gabriel Carosso Le Sept Arts. On Line Productions ANRTA 1999. 33 av. MacMahon 75017 Paris, France.
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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Actors speaking on acting

TDR has published a number of special issues devoted to acting which include either interviews with actors and/or essays based on interviews with actors which include extensive quotations from actors about their process.

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2. *TDR* 23, 1, 1979 includes interviews with and/or essays on Spalding Gray and Winston Tong, among others.
3. *TDR* 25, 3, 1981 includes interviews with and/or essays on Joseph Chaikin and Elizabeth LeCompte, among others.
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5. See also the following individual interviews in *TDR* by Richard Schechner: "Talking with Kate Manheim: Unpeeling a Few Layers," 1987: 31, 4: 136–42. "Kazuo Ohno Doesn't Commute," 1986: 30, 2: 163–9.

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